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THE LAMP AND THE LANTERN:

OR,

LIGHT

FOR THE TENT AND THE TRAVELLER.

"THY WORD IS A LAMP UNTO MY FEET,
"AND A LIGHT UNTO MY PATH."

BY JAMES HAMILTON, D.D.

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PREFACE.

JOSHUA BARNES had a small English Bible, which he is said to have read from beginning to end a hundred and twenty times: and a learned French nobleman is mentioned who had read the Greek Testament as often. But, left to their own inclination, it is to be feared that many would never open the Bible at all; and not a few respectable people may be found who have never given it so much as one regular perusal.

In some minds "tasks" and "the Testament" are indissolubly associated. Others have never had their attention called to the beautiful and impressive passages which the Bible contains. And many would really be thankful if a friend would put them on the way to find it an instructive and interesting book.

For the sake of such readers the following pages

were written, and the author will deem himself happy if in any instance they answer their purpose.

The substance of the first three chapters has already appeared in the Lectures of the Young Men's Christian Association, and one of them having been republished in America, has brought the writer several welcome communications from that country. He finds that a correspondent there has long entertained the project of arranging the Sacred Books, each in a separate volume, and the whole in one miniature cabinet, so that, with the individuality of its several parts, this "Divine Library" would still retain its canonical unity. And as these sheets were passing through the press, the compiler received from Boston a volume entitled "Hebrew Lyrical History; or Select Psalms, arranged in the order of the events to which they relate. By Thomas Bulfinch:"—a work displaying great taste and industry, and, although the independent prompting of its author's mind, going far to realize one suggestion of the following pages.

Nor can the writer allude to America without recalling a friend, whose zeal in their circulation helped to give the author a reflex pleasure in his own pro-

ductions. His name is appropriate here: for he was a lover of the Bible, and had it not been for such a book, our world should never have known men so benevolent, so generous, and so happy as the Hon. Amos Lawrence.

48, *Euston Square*,
May, 1853.

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CHAPTER I.

WHAT FIFTY YEARS HAVE DONE FOR THE BIBLE.

THE British and Foreign Bible Society was instituted in March, 1804; consequently, it has now entered on the fiftieth year of its existence. Such a year is an important epoch in the modern history of the Bible, and it is interesting to review what has already been effected.

In the first four years of its existence the Bible Society circulated 80,000 copies of the Scriptures. Up to the present period it has directly or indirectly been accessory to the circulation, in whole or in part, of 43,000,000 of copies of the Word of God. These Bibles include 148 languages or dialects, of which 121 are translations never before printed. Many of these languages were never reduced to rule, had no grammar, no lexicon, had never been seen in print

had never been written down, till Bible translators undertook the arduous task; and altogether, it may be presumed that the Gospel story can now be read in the speech of three-fourths of our earth's inhabitants. It is difficult to estimate the number of copies of the Bible at this moment in existence. School Bibles rapidly wear out. Great numbers have been destroyed by the police in Austria and Italy, and by the priests in Belgium, France, and Ireland. But after allowing for wanton destruction and necessary waste, and adding to the circulation of the British and Foreign Bible Society the efforts of kindred institutions in Scotland and America, and the vast number of copies published in every free country by private enterprise, and those which are included in every commentary, I should not wonder though there were forty millions of Bibles at this moment in existence, or an average of one copy for every six families of the human race. At the beginning of the century it is estimated that four millions of copies could not have been found in all the world; so that these fifty years have multiplied the Bread of Life tenfold.

Taking a retrospect of these fifty years, a few reflections suggest themselves:—

1. How secure from extinction the sacred books now are! There was a time when a human spec-

tator would not have deemed them free from peril. At one period they were in the hands of the priesthood; and although, no doubt, the Greeks and Syrians possessed them as well as the Latin Churches, yet you would have said that it was a critical time for Scripture, when it was almost entirely in sacerdotal custody — when there were scarcely any Bibles except in cathedral and convent libraries. But just as the Jews guarded, with superstitious care, the Moses and the Prophets who were destined to accredit a Messiah whom they hated, so the monks and the middle-age clergy transcribed and transmitted those Gospels which were destined to give birth to the Reformation, and deal the death-blow to Popery. Doubtless numbers regret it now. The burners of printed Bibles regret the preservation of written ones, and bitterly do some of them lament that Mother Church should have cherished in her bosom the very serpent that stings her. But the thing has been done. From the day that Faust threw off his first copy, the Bible was safe. Instead of a thousand written ones, there speedily were myriads of printed Testaments; and, although the Inquisition and the Confessional have consigned to the flames shop-fulls and ship-loads, every year has made the task of the Papacy more tremendous; and, to say nothing of the forty millions of Bibles in actual

existence, so pervaded with Scriptural fact and allusion is all our literature, so fraught with Scriptural hope and principle are multitudes of our fellow-men, so bright with Bible knowledge is our modern atmosphere, that it would be almost as easy to close the portals of the East and shut out the day-spring, as to exclude the morning of Truth now dawning on the mountains of Time—that it would be almost as easy to make the Mediterranean another Haarlem Lake, and pump it dry, as to drain off from the Old World and the New that knowledge of the Lord which is beginning to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

2. Whilst the sacred volume has thus multiplied, how amazingly has the evidence of its truth and divinity augmented! Never in so short a time was its external evidence so remarkably strengthened. Remember that there never was a period of research so sifting, of inquiry so unscrupulous, of discovery so unprecedented as the last forty years. Never—if we except the great Reformation upheaval—never was there a time when so many shams have exploded and so many phantoms been torn to tatters—never have so many hoary prejudices been marched off the stage, and so many time-honoured errors been consigned to oblivion, as within our living day; and betwixt the severe tests of historic accuracy introduced by

Niebuhr and the unexpected revelations of antiquity which have rewarded exploring enterprise, much that once passed for history is now no more than historic fable. It has been a nervous time for imposture: it has been a noble time for the Bible. Each fresh discovery has been a new leaf to its laurel,—a new gem to its coronet. Lieutenant Lynch has floated down the Jordan, and explored the Dead Sea; and his sounding-line has fetched up from the deep physical confirmation of the catastrophe which destroyed the Cities of the Plain. Robinson, and Wilson, and Bartlett, and Bonar, have taken pleasure in the very dust and rubbish of Zion: and they come back declaring that the Bible is written on the very face of the Holy Land. Since Laborde opened up the lost wonders of Petra, its stones have cried aloud, and many a verse of Jehovah's Word stands graven there with a pen of iron in the rock for ever. Scepticism was wont to sneer and ask, Where is Nineveh, that great city of three days' journey? But since Botta and Layard have shown its sixty miles of enclosing wall, Scepticism sneers no longer. Hidden in the sands of Egypt, many of God's witnesses eluded human search till within the last few years; but now, when Bibles increase, and are running to and fro through the earth, and when fresh confirmations are timely, God gives the word, and there is a resurrec-

tion of these witnesses; and from their sphinx-guarded sepulchres old Pharaohs totter into court, and testify how true was the tale which Moses wrote three thousand years ago. "In my youth," said Caviglia, when Lord Lindsay found him in the East, "I read Jean Jacques and Diderot, and believed myself a philosopher; I came to Egypt, and the Scriptures and the Pyramids converted me." And even so, a visit to Palestine, the reading of Keith's "Fulfilment of Prophecy"—nay, the mere sight of the Assyrian excavations, has given faith to many a doubter—just as I could scarcely imagine any one reading Dr. Stroud on the "Physical Cause of Christ's Death," or Mr. Smith on the "Shipwreck of St. Paul," without carrying away the firmest conviction of these historical facts, and, consequently, of all those vital truths which the facts by implication involve. And if, during this interval, the rampart has been strengthened, the rock itself has risen higher. It is not only the wall of circumvallation which has received fresh facings, as well as vaster blocks into its fabric, but the citadel itself is become a taller and more defiant stronghold. The outward confirmations have, no doubt, multiplied; but the internal evidence has augmented still more. I do not so much refer to those minute mutual confirmations which the sagacity of Paley was the first to indicate, and which Blunt

and Birks have so acutely followed up; nor to the appearance within these years of the works on internal evidence, so beautiful and so establishing, by Erskine and Gurney; but I mean those demonstrations of the Gospel's divinity which have been given on a larger scale in our own day than in any age since Pentecost,—the individuals and the communities among which it has been signalized as the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation.

3. I have said that never was the Word of God so abundant, and that never was its truth more incontrovertibly established. I would venture to add, that never was its meaning better understood. Thanks to the progress of philology and the exactness of modern exegesis, the precise force of words and phrases is now so thoroughly ascertained that, if no new doctrine has been added to the Creed, many a dark saying has cleared up, and many a passage faintly apprehended has beamed forth in full-orbed significance, or resolved, like a nebula before a powerful telescope, into so many sparkling felicities. Thanks to the progress of archæology, a man like Bekker knows the every-day life of an old Greek or Roman better than most people know the life of a modern Turk or Spaniard; and a man like F. Strauss or Jahn knows the religious obser-

vances, the domestic economy, the daily on-goings of an ancient Hebrew, better than most of us know the habits and usages of the class in English society a little above or a little below ourselves. Thanks to the progress of this antiquarian zeal, a flood of illumination has overspread the historic Scriptures,—and with the home-life and sanctuary-life of ancient Palestine reproduced and restored; with its people reaping and threshing, and shearing sheep; arming for the battle, and burying the dead; travelling up to the temple, or attending a wedding,—with all this going on before our eyes almost as vividly as if we had lived alongside of Ruth and Araunah, David and Solomon, John and Nathanael, it is easy to see, not only what helps we have for realizing the scene, but for dissolving many a difficulty and appreciating many a recondite, but interesting and instructive, detail. And thanks to a style of exposition at once rational and devout, the Scriptures have lately emitted their import with a spontaneousness and fulness too little known to earlier commentators: and by comparing Scripture with Scripture, and by seeking the mind of the Spirit in each particular passage; by trying to find out the meaning of the text rather than confirmations for a tenet; the lively oracles have yielded a richness and a variety of instruction which never requited the Procustean exertions of

partisan critics; so that, much as we love our churches, and much as we value our systems, we are all learning to confess that Christianity is wider than any church, and Scripture more comprehensive than any system.

4. Finally, I may add, that never were there so many minds under scriptural influences as at the present time. Not that we attribute all the effect to the direct perusal of the Scriptures. The persons impressed by the solitary or social reading of the Word may be comparatively few; but all who are wrought upon by the preaching of the Gospel, by the conversation of Christian friendship, by the instruction of Sabbath-schools, ultimately owe any good they get to that incorruptible seed of the kingdom. Silent, and often superficial, as its influence is, I scarcely know whither to turn without encountering the ubiquitous pervasion and universal ascendancy of the Book of books. The galleries of our princes blaze with canvas which catches inspiration from its themes, and the walls of the humblest cottage are adorned with pictures of Joseph and his Brethren, of David and the Giant, of Daniel in the Den, of the Wise Men at Bethlehem's Manger. Our art-manufactures borrow a charm from this exhaustless source, and in their applications of Scripture incident they faintly prefigure the day when on the horse-bridles

and the bowls of the altar, "Holiness to the Lord" shall be the glittering legend; and brightly in advance of the godless or Pagan poetry of other times—the literature of our living age, even when least professedly religious, like the wild deer that carries with it the odour of the herbs which it brushes in its course—that literature bears with it an aroma from the Mountain of Myrrh, and tells how thickly in the outside world plants are now blossoming which once were exotics confined to this sacred enclosure. Our legislation waxes more and more scriptural—less sanguinary, less selfish, less profane, since the date of the Bible Society, and is, in some degree, its doing. It has dispensed with a multitude of unnecessary oaths; it has repealed a hundred capital punishments; it has abolished the slave-trade and slavery; and it is earnestly intent on the education of the people. That Bible has made us philanthropic. Multiplying institutions for every form of misery—for the blind, the deaf, the orphan, the diseased, the insane, the idiot, it has found a wide and open channel where other ages only saw a misty and land-locked inlet, and in its cruise of kindness, and at a cost of many hundreds of thousands yearly, it leaves its Gospel on the shores of either hemisphere. The builder of our churches and chapels, the originator of our

Ragged Schools, it is the father and the fosterer of all our Evangelistic Societies,—for few, except Scripture-readers, are supporters of missions. All this it has chiefly accomplished through the minds who have come under its saving and transforming power. Far too few, these are no longer a solitary à-Kempis or a Bernard in his cell—no longer a shivering handful in a Waldensian valley, or a withered remnant, as in the black and blaspheming afternoon of the bygone century; but already they constrain you to think of the multitude which no man can number. When the Bible Society was formed, its founders rejoiced because there was even one nobleman who would consent to preside over it; there are twenty at least who would now be worthy successors to Lord Teignmouth. There were three or four Members of Parliament who were not ashamed to speak at its Meetings; the Parliament now sitting could send to Exeter Hall ten times as many. And when you cast your eye over this British commonwealth, and over the equally numerous Transatlantic republic—when you recal the lesser companies of believers in France, Italy, Switzerland, the goodly bands in Prussia and Holland, and the mission churches of Polynesia, India, and Africa — when you think what all the Bible has been to you—when you think of the

Saviour whom it has revealed—of the earthly home it has gladdened, and the bright Hereafter which it has opened and ensured: and when you further consider that all which your Bible has been to you is as nothing compared with what it has been to more vivid believers, to those not only *for* whom, but *in* whom Christ lives—to whom all its promises are "Yea and Amen"—to whom its heaven is not a mere futurity commencing by-and-by, but a blessed *present* which can never cease;—when you consider all this, you will allow that it would be a less calamity which would withdraw the sun from the firmament, or the oxygen from the atmosphere, than that which would rob regenerate humanity of the vital air and cheering light of revelation. Or if you look at it as a patriot looks, you will allow that the Anglo-Saxon temperament—that mysterious and magical amalgam of races which makes the pent-athlete and prize-winner all the world over—if once the cementing principle, the scriptural intelligence and godly fear, were dissolving out of it,—might become very like Nebuchadnezzar's image, partly gold, partly iron, and all tumbling down because it stood on feet of miry clay—you will allow that whatever power there may be in "blood," there is more in God's blessing—that whatever spell there may be in "mother wit," there is more in the wisdom from

above—that whatever defence there is in a nation's heroism, no nation can long be heroic which does not look at "the things which are invisible;" and consequently, that whatever protection there may be in the wooden walls of Old England, there is still more in the paper boards of the Bible—still more in that adamant bulwark, the Word of the Lord, which, when armies have withered and flotillas have faded, endureth for ever.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT THE BIBLE MAY DO FOR OURSELVES.

HEAVEN-SENT and all-fitting as the Bible is, I fear that on few of us has it produced its entire effect. Few of us have felt the aggregate and collective impression of its several glories. And cheerfully allowing that there are more readers now than ever, and allowing, too, that the book is better understood each successive year, I would still submit that there are very few on whose minds the Bible leaves that manifold impression which its Divine completeness is fitted to imprint.

To make my meaning plain allow me to ask,—What constitutes your ideal of a perfect man? If you were asked to describe the normal type of humanity—the pattern man—what are the mental and moral qualities which you would ascribe to him?

Would you not give him an eye for the beautiful, and an ear for the melodious? In other words, would you not give him taste? Would you not assign to him the ability to reason, and a relish for information? In other words, would you not assign to him the love and the faculty of knowledge—in one word, intelligence? Would you not endow him with a susceptibility to what is glorious in the Godhead, and what is endearing in manhood? In other words, would you not endow him with the devout and the benevolent affections? And, finally, would you not impart to him a conscience so tender that he would be wretched when doing wrong, and ready for the doing of all right? In other words, would you not confer healthy and active moral powers? Taste and intelligence, affections, devout and benevolent, and healthful moral powers,—these go together to make a perfect manhood. These went together when God made the first Adam, and these re-appeared, again together, when the second Adam came. And to these various faculties, the book of man's Maker is marvellously and divinely adapted.

1. Have you taste? Then this is of all books the most sublime and beautiful. So Burns, and Byron, and many others have confessed, who still had no eye for its spiritual glories. But it would not lessen your appreciation of these last, if you enjoyed the

other also; and if the same reader, who with the meekness of a new-born babe imbibed the word which is able to save his soul, withal received the graphic and glowing word which is able to fire his fancy or refine his taste. This is a matter to which many men are indifferent; but it is not a matter to which the Creator is indifferent. He has made not only a useful world—a world which shall cover our tables with food, and load our hearths with fuel; but he has made a fair and lovely world, which shall fill our minds with beautiful pictures, and soothe our chafed spirits with gentle and tender emotions. And though it may sound very shrewd, "Give me the coals and the corn, and I will give you the scenery—give me the solid wealth, and I will give you as much as you can carry off in both eyes!"—to say this is a humbling confession. It is to say that God has made a great deal for which you have no use, and which you cannot admire; and it is to confess yourself the inferior of that neighbour who "inherits all things,"—who agrees with the Almighty Maker in pronouncing his handiwork "very good," and who may enjoy the corn and the coals none the less, because his higher nature has first found a feast in the mere sight of the hills and the valleys.

"Doctrine and duty are what I want in my Bible," says one; "I have no use for poetry and pictures." That is to say, you have no use for a large portion of

the Book. Many of the precepts, many of the practical lessons of Scripture are imbedded in picturesque narratives; and many of its doctrines must be quarried from under a bright and verdant surface,—drawn up, as in the miner's basket, from what is at first sight only a touching incident or a thrilling psalm. Surely he is the completer man, and to him the Bible is the diviner book, whose utilitarian instinct is not more satisfied with its solid commodities, than his æsthetic nature is regaled with its ethereal beauties and transcendent charms; and of the two I expect he will come nearest to a scriptural theologian, not who merely says in the words of a formula, "God is a Being infinite in power," but who, withal saying this, can accompany the adoring Psalmist in His printless path on the waters, and enter His pavilion of dark clouds, and see Jehovah looking on the mountains, till beneath His burning eye the volcano smokes; or, with the patriarch of Uz, mounts the spurning charger, and flies till lightning flashes from his feet, and in the clash of conflicting squadrons thunder "clothes his neck," and fluctuates over the plain. And of the two, I expect he will come nearest to a New Testament disciple, not who is content with a code of Christian ethics, but whose eye affects his heart, and who, through the music of Christ's words, and the beauty of Christ's parables,

and the fascination of Christ's walk, is led to pant after Christ's spirit, and absorb Christ's example.

2. Have you intelligence? Have you a thirst for knowledge,—a love of information? Do you wish to have your understanding expanded by the greatest thoughts, and your memory furnished with the most important facts? Then begin with the Bible. You will find in it the materials of an inexhaustible instruction. Even on such matters as ethnology, or the cradles of the different human races, on the origin of laws, on the commencement of different arts and inventions, you will be astonished how large is the light which it throws; and on matters of infinitely higher moment its information is sole and exclusive. How evil first got into our world, what has been our human history in relation to the Most High, what are his dispositions towards us, and his purposes regarding us, how alone we are to recover the nobility of our nature, and the blessedness of our primeval condition—on questions such as these, there is only one Book which can give an absolute and authoritative deliverance. And yet, from not understanding what they read—or, rather, from reading without understanding what they seek for—millions are missing the main contents of the Bible. For instance, there are four great histories contained in it; a History of Redemption; a History of the Jews;

a History of the Saviour; and a History of the First Planting of Christianity. And no words can express the moral and intellectual mastery, the firm footing to his faith, the key to other truths, which a man acquires by getting a comprehensive knowledge of any one of these four histories. But there are many chapter-readers, many text-learners, to whom these histories are each a hazy huddle, and who would find it impossible to describe the successive stages by which the great redemption developed on the world, from its first dim dawn at Eden to its full Pentecostal blaze; who could not coherently relate the original segregation, and the subsequent fortunes of that pupil-nation, that scholar-people, to whom God committed his oracles, and into whose arms he was about to consign his Incarnate Son; nay, who could not even give a succinct statement of the manner in which the Saviour set about his ministry, and how he filled up its three short years, and how it really was that he finished the work which the Father gave him to do; and who could as little tell the beginning of the Church's history, and where and how it was that the tender plant of Christianity was first transferred from its Hebrew nursery, its forcing ground in Jerusalem, and planted out in our open Gentile forest. And very much as a consequence of this confusion, there are numbers not

careless, not neglecters of the Bible, who have not yet found out the chief things for the sake of telling us which the Bible was given; who hardly know what is God's aspect in the Gospel, whether it is lowering or loving, and whether salvation is wages to be worked for, a blessing to be prayed for, a boon to be earned by tears and endeavours; or a gift free and gratuitous, the purest of presents, a donative divine and absolute, only waiting to be enclasped and enjoyed: and who, if they do know that trust in Christ is salvation, can hardly tell whom it is that they are to believe, or how it is that believing *him* should save *them*.

3. Have you emotions and affections? Then the Bible tells you things that you should hate. It tells you things that should stir your indignation. Moreover, it tells you of things which you should admire and covet. It tells you, too, of One whom you cannot love enough, and to whom you can never feel enough beholden.

After twenty years of labor the missionaries had come no speed in Greenland. They had taught the elements of natural theology, and many a moral lesson without the slightest success. One day John Beck was writing out the Greenland version of the Gospels, and some of the savages were looking on. They asked him what it was: he read to them

Christ's agony in the garden. Some of them laid their hands on their mouths, and one of them exclaimed, in a loud and anxious tone, "How was that? tell me that once more, for I, too, would fain be saved." It was the first time that such an exclamation had been heard from the lips of a Greenlander; and not only Kajarnak, but many of his companions, soon yielded to the "Story of Grace," as told in God's own Word; and finding how the sharpest of weapons is the sword of the Spirit, the missionaries thenceforth seldom wielded any other.

And would it not be good for us all if we allowed God himself to speak to us more? There is no voice so soft, yet so solemn; so authoritative, yet so considerate and kind. Let us not fear to listen, and however munificent its promises, however gracious its assurances, let us not diminish nor distrust them: for the Speaker means what he says—the Speaker is divine. We have had friends who did a great deal for us, but we never had one who gave his life for us. Nay, were redemption a thing which had still to take place, and were the Friend of sinners coming to you and saying, "I am willing to die for you; I am prepared to shed my blood as a ransom for your soul; but the prospect is very terrible: even now its awful accompaniments make me sorrowful even unto death:" fearful as would be the alternative,

I think you would refuse. I think you would be constrained to cry, "No, no, blessed Jesus, it cannot be! Yonder heaven, with its bright spirits and its happy bowers, is very captivating; and, oh! yonder hell, with its blaspheming inmates and its sleepless anguish, is very horrible. But thou! thou whose pure soul never felt the shadow of one sinful thought, that thou shouldst perish in torture and in shame to purchase heaven for me, it were atrocious to allow it; it must not, cannot be! Live, kind Saviour, live! and forward to thy deserved fate, oh, guilty, hapless wretch!" But the Saviour was too generous to consult you. It was a matter betwixt the Father and himself. It was entirely arranged betwixt the loving Father and the loving Son. And now that it is all over, he comes to you in the Gospel asking two things. He comes asking, as if a favor for himself, that you would take the benefit of his finished work, that you would trust your soul's salvation to his God-propitiating and God-glorifying atonement. And then he asks that you would do this other favor for the friend who died for you. He is visibly here no longer. He no longer goes about dispensing benefits, cures, temporal comforts, salvations, through the abodes of men. But he wishes the work to go on, and he wants it to be carried on by you. Do you love me?

then love my brothers, and make them happy. Do you love me? then love all other Christians, and try not to find out their failings, but to foster and help forward their graces. Do you love me? then clothe the naked, tend the sick, visit the prisoner, reclaim the outcast. Do you love me? Minister, teacher, neighbour, lovest thou me? then feed my sheep—feed my lambs.

4. Finally, have you active powers? Have you energies which can be directed to practical purposes? Then the Word of God tells you how to bestow these in the manner most worthy of your high calling and your immortal destiny. It shows how there is not a thing so trivial or so secular but there is a way of doing it which pleases your Master in heaven, and redounds to the glory of God.

In one part of Burmah there is a village of professing Christians belonging to the Karen race. Fourteen years ago, although they had Christian teachers, they had no Bible; at least, their entire Bible was the Gospel of Matthew in manuscript. One day the missionary's wife was reading to a group of them that chapter where Christ speaks of visiting himself when sick or in prison as represented in the person of his disciples. They instantly took it home to themselves: like most heathens, they had hitherto been very heartless towards their suffering

neighbours. But they were not content with knowing the Lord's will; they went their way, and did it. There was one poor widow who, along with her child, was afflicted with leprosy. They had hitherto left her to pine away neglected and uncared for; they now hastened to her hovel. Some of them cleaned her house; others fetched water; and some brought her rice and other comforts, till the poor outcast was bewildered with delight. In the same way they dealt with other afflicted neighbours. Nor was it a mere transient fit of kindness, but it was sustained with silent and unostentatious perseverance,—none being allowed to lack what they themselves enjoyed.* So was it in the beginning of the Gospel. In some measure inured to that tender mercy which came with the Advent, we can hardly realise what a burst of benevolence shone forth on the world for the first time when the disciples were all of one heart and one mind, and had all things in common; and, inverting the selfishness of fallen humanity, found a deliciousness and a joy in doing good and diffusing happiness. And, although all the busy philanthropies of the present age are so many successive emanations from the same great source of loving-kindness, we are far from fancying that the limit has been reached, or that

* "The Bible in many Lands," p. 14, (Bagster,)—a book of great beauty, and replete with interesting information.

Christians are yet as kind and genial and beneficent as the Gospel would admit of, or as the God of love desires.

For some years the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists have had an interesting mission among the Khasiah Hills of India. One of the converts said to his teacher, "The Word of God is truly wonderful, for I have some new thoughts every time I look into it. I do not find it so with anything else; but the Word of God is like a fountain which sends forth fresh waters every day. They are not the same; but though they differ, they are all very good. Even the same verse says something new whenever I look into it." This is "the divine fulness of Scripture," which Luther adored; and this is "the exceeding broadness of the commandment" which, when the works of genius and clever compositions looked to the Psalmist like ponds and reservoirs, stretched away in shoreless plenitude, defying a seraph to fathom its depth, or an archangel to see to the end of its "perfection."* And though I can foresee great things awaiting the Bible—though I could hope for the Psalms of David a transfusion into metre worthy of their matchless grace and grandeur—though I would not despair of there yet rising up in the Church of God some intellect at once colossal and devout, a

* Psalm cxix. 96.

mighty conciliator, who should demonstrate harmonies where at present we see only contradictions, and who should propound a creed that would be not a perspective, but a projection *in plano*, and which should carry general consent, not by its abundant omissions, but by its rightly-placed and rightly-proportioned insertions; whilst I quite believe that the Christian Church is yet in its ethical infancy, and that, as we follow on to know the Lord, the standard of Christian consistency will rise till the Church of the Future is as much purer than the Church of the Present as that church is purer than Corinth: till, for instance, "hatred, variance, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies," be to its members as rare and revolting as to us already are "lasciviousness, idolatry, murder, drunkenness, revellings, and such like;" and till a churl, a miser, or an idler, shall be deemed as unfit for Christian fellowship as we deem a swearer, or a Sabbath-breaker: though I can imagine and hope all this—though Christendom may not be mature enough to perceive as yet all those beauties of thought and all those theological riches—all that ethical wisdom and heavenly sustenance with which the Most High has replenished his Word,—what I wish to impress on your mind and my own is, that there is no end to the discoveries and the delights which await the exploring and prayerful student. Like the

Khasiah Christian, you will find that even the same verse says something new every time you look into it, and new circumstances will give it new significance. Even the same Bible, perused in sickness or sorrow, will be as good as a new revelation; and though you should live to the years of a patriarch—though you should attain the comprehensive views of a Butler or a Calvin—though you should carry to the study the learning of a Gesenius or a Michaelis—though you should be blessed with the experimental enjoyment which made Fletcher, Martyn, and M'Cheyne, so mighty in the Scriptures—like the father of the modern astronomy, you will confess at the last, "I have picked up a few pebbles on the strand, but the ocean is still to explore."

CHAPTER III.

THE BIBLE AND THE SCHOLAR.

God made the present earth as the Home of Man; but had he meant it as a mere lodging, a world less beautiful would have served the purpose. There was no need for the carpet of verdure or the ceiling of blue; no need for the mountains, and cataracts, and forests; no need for the rainbow, no need for the flowers. A big, round island, half of it arable, and half of it pasture, with a clump of trees in one corner, and a magazine of fuel in another, might have held and fed ten millions of people; and a hundred islands, all made on the same pattern, big and round, might have held and fed the population of the globe. But man is something more than the animal which wants lodging and food. He has a spiritual nature, full of keen perceptions and deep sympathies. He has an eye for the sublime and the beautiful, and his

kind Creator has provided man's abode with affluent materials for these nobler tastes. He has built Mont Blanc, and molten the lake in which its image sleeps. He has intoned Niagara's thunder, and has breathed the zephyr which sweeps its spray. He has shagged the steep with its cedars, and besprent the meadow with its king-cups and daisies. He has made it a world of fragrance and music,—a world of brightness and symmetry,—a world where the grand and the graceful, the awful and the lovely, rejoice together. In fashioning the Home of Man, the Creator had an eye to something more than convenience, and built not a barrack, but a palace,—not a Union-workhouse, but an Alhambra; something which should not only be very comfortable, but very splendid and very fair; something which should inspire the soul of its inhabitant, and even draw forth the "very good" of complacent Deity.

God also made the Bible as the Guide and Oracle of Man; but had he meant it as a mere lesson-book of duty, a volume less various and less attractive would have answered every end. A few plain paragraphs, announcing God's own character and his disposition towards us sinners here on earth, mentioning the provision which he has made for our future happiness, and indicating the different duties which he would have us perform,—a few simple

sentences would have sufficed to tell what God is, and what he would have us to do. There was no need of the picturesque narrative and the majestic poem,—no need of the proverb, the story, and the psalm. A chapter of theology, and another of morals; a short account of the Incarnation and the great Atonement, and a few pages of rules and directions for the Christian life, might have contained the vital essence of Scripture, and have supplied us with a Bible of simplest meaning and smallest size. And in that case the Bible would have been consulted only by those rare and wistful spirits to whom the great Hereafter is a subject of anxiety, who are really anxious to know what God is, and how they themselves may please Him. But in giving that Bible its Divine Author had regard to the mind of man. He knew that man has more curiosity than piety, more taste than sanctity; and that more persons are anxious to hear some new, or read some beauteous thing, than to read or hear about God and the Great Salvation. He knew that few would ever ask, What must I do to be saved? till they came in contact with the Bible itself; and, therefore, he made the Bible not only an instructive book, but an attractive one,—not only true, but enticing. He filled it with marvellous incident and engaging history; with sunny pictures from Old-

World scenery, and affecting anecdotes from the patriarch times. He replenished it with stately argument and thrilling verse, and sprinkled it over with sententious wisdom and proverbial pungency. He made it a book of lofty thoughts and noble images, —a book of heavenly doctrine, but withal of earthly adaptation. In preparing a guide to immortality, Infinite Wisdom gave not a dictionary, nor a grammar, but a Bible—a book which, in trying to catch the heart of man, should captivate his taste; and which, in transforming his affections, should also expand his intellect. The pearl is of great price; but even the casket is of exquisite beauty. The sword is of ethereal temper, and nothing cuts so keen as its double edge; but there are jewels on the hilt, and exquisite inlaying on the scabbard. The shekels are of the purest ore; but even the scrip which contains them is of a texture more curious than that the artists of earth could fashion it. The apples are gold; but even the basket is silver.

In speaking of the literary excellence of the Holy Scriptures, I am aware of a twofold disadvantage. Some have never looked on the Bible as a readable book. They remember how they got long tasks from it at school, and spelled their arduous way through polysyllabic chapters and joyless genealogies. And in later life they have only heard it sounded forth

monotonous from the drowsy desk, or freezing in the atmosphere of some sparse and wintry sanctuary. So irksome and insipid has every association made it, that were they shut up in a parlour with an old Directory, and an old Almanac, and an old Bible, they would spend the first hour on the Almanac, and the next on the Directory, and would die of *ennui* before they opened the Bible. They have got at home a set of their favourite classics, and on a quiet evening they will take down a volume of Chaucer or Spenser, or even Thomas Fuller or Jeremy Taylor, or an Elzevir Virgil, or a Foulis's Homer, and read at it till long beyond their time of rest; but to them the Bible is no classic. They don't care to keep it in some taking or tasteful edition, and they would never dream of sitting down to read it as a recreation or an intellectual treat. And then there are others in a happier case to whom that Bible is so sacred—who have found it so full of solemn import, and to whom its every sentence is so fraught with divine significance, that they feel it wrong or revolting to read it with the critic's eye. They would rather peruse it on their bended knees, praying God to show them the wonders in his Word, than, with the scholar's pencil in their hand, ready to seize on each happy phrase and exquisite figure. They would rather peruse it in the company of Luther or

Leighton, than along with Erasmus or Grotius We can understand the feelings of each. But we trust that both will bear with us a little whilst we endeavour to shew that if no book be so important as the Bible, so none is more interesting, and that the book which contains most of the beautiful is the one which must ever remain the standard of the good and the true.

And here we would only add one remark which it is important to bear in memory. The rhetorical and poetical beauties of Scripture are merely incidental. Its authors wrote, not for glory nor display—not to astonish or amuse their brethren, but to instruct them and make them better. They wrote for God's glory, not their own; they wrote for the world's advantage, not to aggrandize themselves. Demosthenes composed his most splendid oration in order to win the crown of eloquence; and the most elaborate effort of ancient oratory—the "Panegyric" to which Isocrates devoted fifteen years—was just an essay written for a prize. How different the circumstances in which the speech on Mars Hill was spoken; and the farewell sermon in the upper chamber at Troas! Herodotus and Thucydides composed their histories with a view to popular applause; and Pindar's fiery pulse beat faster in prospect of the great Olympic gathering and the praises of assem-

bled Greece. How opposite the circumstances in which the Seer of Horeb penned his faithful story, and Isaiah and Jeremiah poured forth their fearless denunciations of popular sins! The most superb of modern historians confesses the flutter which he felt when the last line of his task was written, and he thought that perhaps his fame was established. A more important history concludes: "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his Name." And some of you will remember the proud *finale* in which the Roman lyrist predicts for himself immortal celebrity.* Alongside of his eloquent but egotistic vaticination you cannot do better than read the last words of Israel's sweet Singer,—"His name shall endure for ever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things: and blessed be His glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

* "Exegi monimentum ære perennius.
. . . . . Usque ego postera
Crescam laude recens," &c.—Hor. lib. iii. Od. 30.

Remembering then that the Bible contains no ornamental passages, nothing written for mere display, that its steadfast purpose is, "Glory to God in the highest," and the truest blessedness of man, —I repeat that that Bible abounds in passages of the purest beauty and stateliest grandeur, all the grander and all the more beautiful because they are casual and unsought. The fire which flashes from the iron hoof of the Tartar steed as he scours the midnight path is grander than the artificial firework; for it is the casual effect of speed and power. The clang of ocean as he booms his billows on the rock, and the echoing caves give chorus, is more soul-filling and sublime than all the music of the orchestra; for it is the music of that main so mighty that there is a grandeur in all it does,—in its sleep a melody, and in its march a stately psalm. And in the bow which paints the melting cloud there is a beauty which the stained glass or gorgeous drapery emulates in vain; for it is the glory which gilds beneficence, the brightness which bespeaks a double boon, the flush which cannot but come forth when both the sun and shower are there. The style of Scripture has all this glory. It has the gracefulness of a high utility; it has the majesty of intrinsic power; it has the charm of its own sanctity; it

never labors, never strives, but instinct with great realities, and, bent on blessed ends, it has all the translucent beauty and unstudied power which you might expect from its lofty object and all-wise Author.

There is no phenomenon in nature so awful as a thunder-storm; and almost every poet, from Homer and Virgil down to Dante and Milton, or rather down to Grahame or Pollok, has described it. In the Bible, too, we have a thunder-storm, the 29th Psalm—the description of a tempest, which, rising from the Mediterranean, and travelling by Lebanon and along the inland mountains, reaches Jerusalem, and sends the people into the temple-porticoes for refuge. And, besides those touches of terror in which the geographical progress of the tornado is described, it derives a sacred vitality and power from the presence of Jehovah in each successive peal. "The voice of the Lord is on the sea: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is on the mighty sea. The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf: Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire.

The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in His temple doth every one speak of His glory. The Lord sitteth upon the water-torrent: yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. The Lord will give strength unto his people:" (and now the sun shines out again;) "the Lord will bless His people with peace."*

Amongst those who have expressly written on the Sublime, it is agreed that the most thrilling spectacle is one whose obscure outline or vague presence at once suggests the supernatural. Of this sublime in terror the fourth of Job supplies an acknowledged instance:—

* Over many of the Psalms it sheds a flood of new significance when the reader understands their mechanism, as in the case of many it has been disclosed by the labours of Lowth, Horsley, Hengstenberg, and others. It was one morning in his house at Dundee, that a friend dear and ever memorable, Robert McCheyne, showed us the geographical structure of this 29th Psalm. And certainly it enhances the meaning of this majestic ode when we conceive the spectator-psalmist as standing with the awe-struck multitude in the temple porch, watching the march of the thunder-storm as it advances from the Mediterranean or "mighty" sea, and imagining its progress from Lebanon, adown the range of Hermon, and the course of the Jordan, till it darkens over the wilderness and reaches Jerusalem and bursts in a water-flood around themselves.

"A thing, too, was imparted to me secretly,
Mine ear received a whisper with it.
In tumults of night-visions,
When deep sleep falls on men,
Panic came on me, and horror,
And the multitude of my bones did shake.
A spirit passed before my face,
The hair of my flesh stood up:
It stood—but I could not discern its form:
A figure before mine eyes:
—Silence—and I heard a voice,
'Shall a mortal be righteous before God?
Shall a man be pure before his Maker?'"

But perhaps the poetic beauty in which the Bible most excels all other books is description of the world around us. A better idea of the poetic susceptibility was never given, than when John Foster called it *physiopathy*, "the faculty of pervading all Nature with one's own being, so as to have a perception, a life, an agency, in all things." "If you observe a man of this order, though his body be a small thing, completely invested with a little cloth, he expands his being in a grand circle all around him. He feels as if he grew in the grass, and flowers, and groves; as if he stood on yonder distant mountain-top, conversing with clouds, or sublimely sporting among their imaged precipices, caverns, and ruins. He flows in that river, chafes in its cascades, smiles in the water-lilies, frisks in the

fishes. He is sympathetic with every bird, and seems to feel the sentiment that prompts the song of each; and from this ability to transfuse himself into every object around him in a certain sense he inherits all things." To which we would only add, that besides this poetic sympathy with Nature, the sacred writers seem to have possessed a still purer perception of what Nature is. They not only could transfuse their own life into the landscape, but they could discern how much of the living God is there. And instead of that material semblance which a Claude or a Rembrandt might project on his canvas, or Virgil or Shenstone might embody in his verse, they inhaled Jehovah's breath and hearkened to Jehovah's voice, and received into their adoring bosoms as much of Jehovah's life as lingers in our defaced and fallen world. Hence it comes to pass, that the Book which contains by far the brightest and most vivacious landscape—the holiest and happiest view of the things around us, is the Word of God. Viewed in his own light, and delineated by his own pencil, the mountains "skip," the seas "clap hands," the little hills "rejoice," and the valleys "sing." The Bible landscape has a limpid freshness, as viewed by an eye which carnality has never dimmed, or rather that loving and observant eye which grace has made young again. It needs no Dryads to people

its woodlands, no Oreads to flit over its mountains, no Naiads to give mirth to its waters or music to its streams; for a higher animation fills them, and every chiming brook and fluttering spray, every zephyr and every blessed sound, is a note in God's own anthem,—"Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps: fire and hail: snow and vapours: stormy wind fulfilling his word: mountains and all hills: fruitful trees and all cedars: beasts and all cattle: creeping thing and flying fowl: kings of the earth and all people: princes and all judges of the earth: both young men and maidens; old men and children: let them praise the name of the Lord; for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven."

But instead of quoting illustrative passages from what may be called the pastoral and descriptive poetry of Scripture, I shall read one which, whilst a graphic description, like most kindred portions of Holy Writ, owes its sublimity to its moral power; and I quote it the rather, because our own translation does not bring out its entire significance. It is the twenty-eighth chapter of Job, and the question is, Where is Wisdom to be found? and, What is the abode or hiding-place of Understanding? Is it a deposit hidden in the bowels of the earth?—a treasure for which we must ransack the caverns

underneath, or rummage in the rifted rock? Is it a secret for which we must bribe the grave? or which death alone can whisper in the ear? And so it commences with a magnificent account of the miner's doings underground:—

"Truly there is a mine for the silver,
And a place for the gold so fine:
Iron is dug up from the earth,
And the earth pours forth its copper.
Man digs into darkness,
And explores to the utmost bound
The stones of dimness and death shade;
He breaks up the veins from the matrice,
Which, unthought of, and underfoot,
Are drawn forth to gleam among mankind.
The surface pours forth bread,
But the subterranean winds a fiery region.
Its stones are the sapphires' bed,
And it hides the dust of gold.
It is a path which the eagle knows not,
Nor has the eye of the vulture scanned it.
The lion's whelp has not tracked it,
Nor the ravening lion pounced on it.
The miner thrusts his hand on the sparry ore,
And overturns the mountains by their roots.
He cuts a channel through the rock,
And espies each precious gem.
He binds up the oozing waters,
And darts a radiance through the gloom.
But, oh, where shall WISDOM be found?
And where is the place of UNDERSTANDING?
Man knows not its source,
For it is not to be found in the land of the living.

The sea says, 'It is not in me;'
And 'Not in me,' echoes the abyss.
Solid gold cannot be given for it,
Nor silver be weighed for its purchase.
It cannot be bought for the ingot of Ophir,
For the precious onyx or the sapphire.
The burnished gold and crystal cannot equal it,
Nor golden trinkets match it.
Talk not of corals or pearls,
For the attraction of wisdom is beyond rubies.
The topaz of Ethiopia cannot rival it,
Nor the purest bullion barter it.
Whence, then, cometh Wisdom?
And where is the place of Understanding?
Hid from the eyes of all living,
And unseen by the fowls of the air,
Destruction and death say,
'We have heard its fame with our ears.'
God understands its track;
He knows its dwelling-place;
For to the ends of the earth he sees
And under all heaven surveys.
When he weighed out the air
And meted out the water;
When he fixed the course of the rain
And the path of the hurricane;
Then did he eye it and proclaim it;
He prepared it and searched it out,
And unto man he said,
'Behold! the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom,
And to depart from evil is Understanding.'"*

* Some lines of the above may be slightly paraphrased; but the version is essentially the same as that of Dr. Mason Goode, with modifications from Dr. Lee and others.

It would consume all our space were we transcribing from the Prophets and the Psalms those passages of grandeur which make the sacred text so awful and august; and of that class we shall give no more. But perhaps the sublime, though the highest order of literary effort, is not, after all, the most popular. Were we putting it to the world at large, we should, probably, find that the books men like best are those which are less exalted above the every-day level, and whose simple incidents, and cheerful glimpses, and human pathos, bring them home to every one's comprehension and feeling. In this sort of narrative that world's book, the Bible, abounds. Do you ask for tenderness? "And Ruth said to her mother-in-law, Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." Do you ask for pathos? "And Cushi said, Tidings, my lord the king; for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. And the king said unto Cushi, Is the young man, Absalom, safe? And Cushi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise up against thee to do thee

hurt, be as that young man is. And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son." Or do you ask for natural, simple, and affecting narrative? "A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's house have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was

yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; and was lost and is found."

I could very willingly have extended these remarks to other species of composition, and would have liked to show particularly how many models of eloquent argument and engaging discourse are contained in the New Testament. But on the wide field of Revelation, with its intellectual opulence, I forbear to enter. I can easily understand how the Bible was one of the four volumes which always lay on Byron's table; and it would be easy to fill a lecture with the testimonies, witting or unwitting, which painters, sculptors, orators, and poets, have rendered to the most thought-suggesting book in all the universe. It never aims at fine writing. It never steps aside for a moment for the sake of a felicitous expression or a good idea. It has only one end—

to tell the world about God and the great salvation; and yet the wonder is, that it has incidentally done more to supply rhetoric with powerful and happy diction, and literature with noble thoughts and images, and the fine arts with memorable subjects, than perhaps all other books that have been written. The world's Maker is the Bible's Author, and the same profusion which furnished so lavishly the abode of man, has filled so richly and adorned so brilliantly the Book of man.

Just as that Bible is the great storehouse and repertory of intellectual *wealth*, so I must add that its vital truth is the grand source of intellectual *power*. When Sir Samuel Romilly visited Paris immediately after the first French Revolution, he remarked, "Everything I saw convinced me that, independently of our future happiness and our sublimest enjoyments in this life, religion is necessary to the comforts, the conveniences, and even the elegances and lesser pleasures of life. Not only I never met with a writer truly eloquent who did not at least affect to believe in religion, but I never met with one in whom religion was not the richest source of his eloquence." And I am persuaded that in things intellectual the rule will hold, that piety is power. I am persuaded

that no productions of genius will survive to the end of all things in which there is not something of God; and I am farther persuaded, that no book can exercise a lasting ascendancy over mankind on which his blessing has not been implored, and in which his Spirit does not speak. Of all the powers and faculties of the human mind, the noblest is the one which God has created for himself; and if that reverential or adoring faculty do not exist, or if it be by suicidal hands extirpated, the world will soon cease to feel any force in the man who has lost his faith in God. The stateliest compartment in this human soul is the one which, in creating it, Jehovah reserved for his own throne-room and presence-chamber; and however curiously decorated or gorgeously furnished the other compartments be, if this be empty and void, it will soon diffuse a blank and beggarly sensation over all the rest. And thus, whilst the Voltaires and Rousseaus, of Atheist memory, are waxing old and vanishing from the firmament of letters, names of less renown, but more religion, brighten to a greater lustre. So true is it that no man can long keep a hold of his fellow-men, unless he himself first has hold of God.

But if a sincere and strenuous Theism be thus important—such natural faith in God as buoyed the wing of Plato in his long and ethereal flights, or

bulged the Saxon thews of Shakespear in his mightiest efforts, incomparably more prevalent is that intellectual prowess which a scriptural faith produces. He is no Unknown God whom the believer in Jesus worships, and it is no ordinary inspiration which that God of light and love supplies to his servants. And were it not for fear of tediousness I would rejoice to enumerate one genius after another which the Gospel kindled, if it did not create. That Gospel, beyond all controversy, was our own Milton's poetic might. It was the struggling energy which, after years of deep musing and wrapt devotion, after years of mysterious muttering and anxious omen, sent its pyramid of flame into old England's dingy hemisphere, and poured its molten wealth—its lava of gold and gems, fetched deep from classic and patriarchal times, adown the russet steep of Puritan theology. It was the fabled foot which struck from the sward of Cowper's mild and silent life a joyous Castalia—a fountain deep as Milton's fire, and like it tinctured with each learned and sacred thing it touched in rising, but soft and full as Siloah's fount, which "flowed fast by the oracle of God." And that Gospel was the torch which, on the hills of Renfrewshire, fired a young spirit,*—himself both sacrifice and

* Pollok.

altar-pile,—till Britain spied the light, and wondered at the brief but brilliant beacon. But why name the individual instances? What is modern learning, and the march of intellect, and the reading million, but one great monument of the Gospel's quickening power? Three hundred years ago the classics were revived; but three hundred years ago the Gospel was restored. Digging in the Pompeii of the middle age, Lorenzo and Leo found the lamps in which the old classic fires had burned; but there was no oil in the lamps, and they had long since gone out. For models of candelabra and burners there could not be better than Livy, and Horace, and Plato, and Pindar; but the faith which once filled them—the old Pagan fervor—was long since extinct, and the lamps were only fit for the shelf of the antiquary. But it was then that, in the crypt of the convent, Luther, and Zuingle, and Melancthon, observed a line of supernatural light, and with lever and mattock lifted the grave-stone, and found the Gospel which the Papist had buried. There it had flamed, "a light shining in a dark place," through unsuspected ages—unquenchable in its own immortality—the long-lost lamp in the sepulchre. Jupiter was dead, and Minerva had melted into ether, and Apollo was grey with eld, and the most elegant idols of antiquity had gone to the moles and the bats.

But there is One who cannot die and does not change —and the Fountain of Scriptural Learning is He who is also the Fountain of Life—the Alpha and Omega—Jesus the Son of God. From his Gospel it was that the old classic lamps, when filled with fresh oil, were kindled again; and at that Gospel it was that Bacon, and Locke, and Milton, and Newton, and all the mighty spirits of modern Europe, caught the fire which made them blaze the meteors of our firmament, the marvels of our favoured time.

Should any one read these lines who is ambitious to be the lasting teacher or the extensive light of society—to paint, or think, or sing, for the student of a future age, let him remember that nothing can immortalize the works of genius if there be no Gospel in them. The facts of that Gospel are the world's main stock of truth—the fire of that Gospel is the only Promethean spark which can ignite our dead truths into quenchless and world-quickening powers.

For practical and devotional purposes we could desire no better version of the Bible than our own truthful and time-hallowed translation. But for those purposes to which we have now been adverting, —for the sake of its intelligent literary perusal, we have sometimes wished that, either in the origi-

nals or in English, some judicious editor would give us, each in a separate fasciculus, the several contributions of each sacred penman. As it is, with the sixty-six volumes of the Bible all compressed into a single tome, we are apt to regard them, not only as homogeneous inspiration, which they are, but as contemporary compositions, which they are not. We forget that, in point of time, there is the same interval between Moses and Matthew, as there is betwixt the close of the canon and the compilation of the Augsburg Confession. And, with each portion comminuted into those little paragraphs called *verses*, we are apt to lose sight of the characteristic style of the various compositions. An epistle looks like a poem, and a history reads like a collection of adages or apophthegms. But allowing one book to contain the Minor Prophets, and another the General Epistles, there would still remain upwards of twenty inspired penmen whose writings might, much to their mutual illustration, be bound up in separate volumes, and preserved in their individual identity. We should thus have in one volume all that Moses wrote, and in another, chronologically arranged, all the writings of Paul. One volume might contain all the Psalms of David; another, those Psalms (nearly as numerous) which were indited by Moses, and Asaph, and others. In one cover might be

bound up the Gospel, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse of John; and in another, that divine Song, those Confessions of a converted philosopher, and that ancient "Wealth of Nations," which are the inspired bequest of the Imperial Solomon. And under such an arrangement might we not hope that books, usually read in chapters or smaller morsels, might sometimes be read continuously,—taken down from the shelf, as another attractive book would be taken, on a leisure evening, and read through at a single sitting? Might we not hope, in such a case, that whilst those who now read the Old and New Testaments would read them still, some who at present do not read the Bible might be tempted to read Paul, Moses, and Isaiah? And is it too sanguine to expect that, as the searching of the Scriptures and sacred knowledge thus increased, some who first resorted to the book for literary entertainment might learn from it the lessons which make wise to life everlasting?

At all events, theology has not yet turned to sufficient account the Bible's marvellous diversity. You know how opposite are the turns, and how various the temperaments, of different people, and how unequal their capacities. One has a logician's intellect, and delights in a dialectic subtilty. Another has a prompt intuition, and deprecates as so much

bamboozlement every ingenious or protracted argument. Some have the ideal faculty so strong, that they never understand a proposition rightly till it sparkles as a sentiment; poet-wise, their eyes are in their apex; they cannot descry matters of fact and homely truths, which creep along the ground or travel on all-fours; but in order to arrest a vision so sublime as theirs, thoughts must spread the wings of metaphor, and soar into the zenith: whilst others are so prosaic, that they are offended at all imagery, and grudge the time it takes to translate a trope or figure. Some minds are concrete, and cannot understand a general statement till they see a particular example. Others are so abstract, that an illustration is an interruption, and an example a waste of time. Most men love history, and nearly all men live much in the future. Some minds are pensive, some are cheerful; some are ardent, and some are singularly phlegmatic. And had an angel penned the Bible, even though he could have condescended to the capacity of the lowliest reader, he could not have foreseen the turn and fitted the taste of every child of Adam. And had a mortal penman been employed, however versatile his talent, however many-faced his mind, he could not have made himself all things to all his brethren, nor produced styles enow to mirror the mental features of all mankind.

In his wisdom and goodness the Most High has judged far better for our world; and using the agency of forty authors—transfusing through the peculiar tastes and temperaments of so many individuals (and these "men of like passions with ourselves," the self-same truths, the Spirit of God has secured for the Bible universal adaptation. For the pensive there is the dirge of Jeremiah and the cloud-shadowed drama of Job. For the sanguine and hopeful, there sounds the blithe voice and there beats the warm pulse of old Galilean Peter. And for the calm, the contemplative, the peacefully-loving, there spreads like a molten melody, or an abysmal joy, the page—sunny, ecstatic, boundless—of John the Divine. The most homely may find the matter of fact, the unvarnished wisdom and plain sense, which is the chosen aliment of their sturdy understandings, in James's blunt reasonings; and the most heroic can ask no higher standard, no loftier feats, no consecration more intense, no spirituality more ethereal, than they will find in the Pauline Epistles. Those who love the sparkling aphorism and the sagacious paradox are provided with food convenient in the Proverbs: and for those whose poetic fancy craves a banquet more sublime, there is the dew of Hermon and Borrah's red wine,—the tender freshness of pastoral hymns, and the purple tumult of triumphal psalms.

And whilst the historian is borne back to ages so remote that grey tradition cannot recollect them, and athwart oblivious centuries, in nooks of brightness and in oases of light sees the patriarch groups, clear, vivid, and familiar as the household scenes of yesterday,—there is also a picture sketched for the explorers of the future. For whilst the Apocalyptic curtain slowly rises,—whilst the seven thunders shake its darkness palpable, and streaks of glory issue through its fringe of fire, the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven; and gazing on the pearly gates, and peaceful streets, and bowers of sanctity, our planet can scarce believe that she is gazing on herself,—that this is old Mother Earth grown young again,—that this vision of holiness and bliss is nothing more than Paradise restored—that "new" but ancient "earth in which dwelleth righteousness."

But in order rightly to appreciate this literary diversity of the Bible's several books, it is essential to remember the plenary inspiration of the Bible collective. Imagine the case of an accomplished evangelist. Suppose there were a missionary endowed with the gift of tongues, and called to ply his labours in different places at successive periods. He goes to France, and, addressing its vivacious inhabi-

tants, he abandons the direct and sober style of his fatherland; every utterance is antithesis; every gem of thought is cut brilliant-wise; and the whole oration jigs on gay, elastic springs. He passes thence to Holland, and in order to conciliate its grave burghers his steady thoughts move on in sober procession, trim, concinnate, old-fashioned, orderly. Anon he finds himself amidst a tribe of Red Indians; and instantly his imagination spreads pinions of flame, and, familiar with thunder-water and burning mountains, his talk is to the tune of the tempest. And ending his progress in Arabia or Persia, through the fantastic sermon skip shadowy antelopes or dream-like gazelles; whilst each interstice of thought is filled by a voluptuous mystery, like the voice of the darkling nightingale as it floats through air laden with jasmine or roses. And thus, "all things to all men," this gifted evangelist wins them all; whereas, had he spoken like an Oriental to the Red Indian, or like a Persian to the Hollander, he would have offended each, and would have been a barbarian to all. The Teacher is one—the same Evangelist everywhere. The truth, the theme is one —over and over again the same glorious Gospel. Nay, the substance of each sermon is essentially one; for it is a new forth-pouring from the same fountain

—another yearning from the same full heart. But to suit successive hearers the rhythm alters, the tune is changed.

Such is the principle on which the Great Evangelist has acted. When inditing sermons for the world, such is the principle on which the Divine Spirit has proceeded. Speaking to men, he has used the words of men. When on the two tables God wrote the Ten Commandments, He did not write them in the speech unutterable of the third heavens —He wrote them in Hebrew letters, Hebrew words, and Hebrew idiom; and had it so pleased him, He might have given all the Scriptures in the self-same way. Employing no mortal pen whatever, from the top of Sinai He might have handed down the one Testament, and from the top of Olivet the other— the whole, from Genesis to Revelation, completed without human intervention, and on amaranthine leaves engraven in Heaven's own holograph. And in such a case there would have been no dispute as to the extent of inspiration; there would have been no need that, like the electrometers of the meteorologist, theologians should invent tests of its intensity, nicely graduated from the zero of Superintendence up to the fulness of Suggestion. But Infinite Wisdom preferred another way. Inspiration He made the counterpart of the Incarnation; and as in

the Incarnate Mystery we have, without mutual encroachment and without confusion, very God and very Man, so in theopneustic Scripture we have a book, every sentence of which is truly human, and yet every sentence of which is truly divine. Holy *men* spake it, but holy men spake and wrote it as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And just as when God sent His Son into the world, He sent him not in the fashion of an angel, nor even in the fashion of a glorified and celestial man, but in all points like His brethren; so when He sent into the world His written word, it came not ready written with an angel's plume, but with reeds from the Jordan it was consigned to paper from the Nile, every word of it Hellenistic, or Hebrew, and yet every word none the less Heavenly. And though the unlettered disciple, who in the identity of the ultimate Author forgets the diversity of the intermediate scribes—though he loses less than the dry critic, who only recognises the mortal penman—that student alone will get the full good of his Bible who recognises these parallel facts—its perfect and all-pervasive divinity, its perfect and all-investing humanity. Or, to sum it up in the vivid words of Gaussen: "As a skilful musician, called to execute alone some masterpiece, puts his lips by turns to the mournful flute, the shepherd's reed, the mirthful pipe, and the war-

trumpet, so the almighty God, to sound in our ears His eternal word, has selected from of old the instruments best suited to receive successively the breath of His Spirit. Thus we have in God's great anthem of revelation the sublime simplicity of John; the argumentative, elliptical, soul-stirring energy of Paul; the fervor and solemnity of Peter; the poetic grandeur of Isaiah; the lyric moods of David; the ingenuous and majestic narratives of Moses; the sententious and royal wisdom of Solomon. Yes, it was all this—it was Peter, Isaiah, Matthew, John, or Moses; but it was God." "And such ought to be the word of Jehovah—like Emanuel, full of grace and truth—at once in the bosom of God and in the heart of man—powerful and sympathizing—celestial and human—exalted, yet humble—imposing and familiar—God and man."

But here, a compunctious thought comes over me. In the previous survey it seems as if we had gone, so many of us, to view a famous palace, and we have stood on the lawn in front, or looked up from the quadrangle, and told its towers and marked its bulwarks, and sketched some of its ornaments; but however commanding the elevation, however graceful the details and various styles, after all the glory is within. No doubt, there is a loveliness even in the letter of Scripture; but there is life for our souls

in its divine significance. My reader, do not rest till you are introduced to the interior. That Book which God has made the monument of the great redemption, and where He has put his own perpetual Shekinah, do you choose it as the gymnasium where you may "nourish a youth" truly "sublime;" the castle where in a world of impiety and an age of peril, you may find entrenchment for your faith and protection for your principles; the sanctuary at whose oracle you may find answers to your doubts and light upon your path; the spirit's home, whither your affections shall every day return, and where your character shall progressively ennoble into a conformity with such a royal residence.

Let me, therefore, as a supplement to these remarks, entreat you to peruse the Bible itself. With prayer, with expectation, with eyes alert and open, read it; in your most tranquil retirement read it; and when a few of you, who are friends like-minded, come together, read it; search it, sift it, talk about it, talk with it. And as he thus grows mighty in it, I promise each earnest Bible-student two rewards,—it will make him both a wiser and a holier man.

Wiser: for the sayings of God's Word are solid. There is a substance, which you must have noticed, cast on the sea-shore, the medusa, or sea-nettle, as

some sorts of it are called; an object rather beautiful as its dome of amber quivers in the sun. And a goodly size it often is,—so large at times that you could scarcely lift it: but it is all a watery pulp, and if you were carrying it home or trying to preserve it, the whole mass would quickly trickle out of sight and leave you nothing but a few threads of substance. Now, most books are like the marine medusa; fresh stranded, newly-published (as the expression is), they make a goodly show; but when a few suns have shone on them, the crystal jelly melts, the glittering cupola has vanished, and a few meagre fibres in your memory are all the residue of the once popular authorship. If you ever tried it, you must have been struck with the few solid thoughts, the few suggestive ideas, which survive from the perusal of the most brilliant of human books. Few of them can stand three readings; and of the memorabilia which you had marked in your first perusal, on reverting to them you find that many of them are not so striking, or weighty, or original as at first you fancied. But the Word of God is solid; it will stand a thousand readings, and the man who has gone over it the most frequently and the most carefully, is the surest of finding new wonders there. And just as the pearls of Scripture retain their intrinsic worth; as notwithstanding the frowsy head-

gear they have garnished, the dull discourses they have adorned, they beam brighter than ever when the hand of a Vinet, or Chalmers, or Hall has arranged them anew into a coronet of sanctified taste and genius: so he amongst sages is the wealthiest man who has detected, and appropriated, and thoroughly possessed himself of the largest number of Bible sayings,—the merchantman who, seeking goodly pearls, has searched for them on this exhaustless strand.

And holier: for though we have hitherto spoken of the Bible very much as if it were a human book, you cannot be long versant with it till you find that it is something more. Like Tabor, it is a "mountain apart." Among the books of this world it is isolated, unique, peculiar; and the farther up you get, the more acquainted you become with human books, and the more alongside of them you study the Book of God, the more amazed will you be at its outstanding elevation, its world-commanding pre-eminence. And just as in scaling a high mountain it needs no chemistry to analyze the air and inform the pilgrim that it is free from impurities; as every breath which paints a purer crimson on his cheek, and sends a tonic tide through all his suppling frame, would tell him its salubrity: so it needs no argument, no analysis, to persuade a spiritual mind

that the air of heaven, the breath of God, is here. In his holier feelings as he reads, in the godly zeal and joyful strenuousness which requite each mounting footstep, with instinct sure his regenerate nature hails the congenial inspiration. And just as on Tabor's summit, when from heaven saints in snowy garments came down, and from Christ His own glory came through, it needed no refracting prism or condensing lens to assure them that it was a body of more than earthly brightness which they were gazing upon: so, my dear reader, when a text is transfigured, when the Holy Spirit in the Word lets out His grace and glory, it will need no Paley nor Butler to prove that the Wisdom and the Power of God are there, but, radiant with emitted splendour, and dazzling your admiring eyes, in God's own light you will see it to be God's own Word. Nor can I wish for you a better wish than that thus you may be often surprised and overwhelmed. Yes, though your lot should be cast in the very midst of this noisy capital, and in the meridian of this man-wasting, money-making age, may you often find your Sabbath, and your place of prayer, and your Bible, "a mountain apart." In blissful bewilderment may you forget the fascinations of earth and the pleasures of sin, and only wake up to find yourself alone with the Master. And none shall less grieve than he whom you have

kindly accompanied thus far, if the literary attractions of the Book be in this manner merged and superseded in charms more spiritual—in attractions which, if they draw you to the Bible, will also draw you to the Saviour, and at last to heaven.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BIBLE AND THE INQUIRER.

A FATHER and a son were on a journey. It was late in the afternoon, but still clear day, when they came to a cottage by the road-side, and the father went in and borrowed a lighted lantern. The young man was exceedingly amused, and perhaps he was a little vexed. If any one should meet them carrying a lamp in the sunshine, it would look so absurd; and what in the world was the use of it? But the older traveller took the young man's jibes good-humouredly, and only answered, "The night cometh." And it did come. They passed no more cottages, but they got into a thick forest, where the daylight faded so rapidly, that the lantern already shone a welcome companion. Not only was the sun gone down, but the last streak of twilight had

vanished. It was dreadfully dark; but the good little lantern spread a cloth of gold before the steps of the travellers, and did not let one shadow or phantom come near them. At last the road divided. "Straight on!" cried the youth. "Not so fast," said the elder; for though the path to the right was less trodden, perhaps it was the one they should take; when fortunately they espied a finger-post, and holding the lamp as high as they could, they read the direction, and found that they would have gone utterly wrong, had they not taken the narrow and neglected foot-way. Rejoicing at their escape, they pushed on merrily; and by-and-by, with his frisky spirits, the youngster went a-head, and was far in advance of the lantern, when the old man heard a plash and a shout, and running up, was just in time to help ashore his impetuous boy, who had soused into a stagnant pool, and who crawled up the bank pale and shivering, with the leeches and duck-weed clinging to his garments. "You see the road was not through this pool, but round it. You should walk in the light;" and so they again set out together. As the stillness deepened, they sometimes heard a rustle in the bushy undergrowth, and distant howlings or a sharp snarl near-hand warned them that the beasts of the forest were abroad; and once or twice they could see a pair of fiery opals

glaring at them, but as soon as they turned the full flame of the lantern in that direction, the goblin retreated. We need not tell the whole adventures of the night; but at last they came to a place where a heavy moan arrested them, and searching in the copse, they found a man stretched on the ground and badly hurt. He had either received a blow on the head, or he had inhaled some stupefying ether, for at first he talked very incoherently. It turned out, that as he had been coming along, a gentleman in black had prevailed on him to cast his lantern into the ditch, and that soon after some footpad had knocked him down and dragged him off the road and robbed him of all his money. As soon as he was somewhat restored, they set him on his beast, and journeyed on together. The day was breaking, and the forest was thinning off on the margin of a magnificent domain. They looked forth on vine-clad hills and a shining river; and though the palace itself could be descried but dimly,—it was so far up in the dazzling sunrise—they could easily make out many mansions. "I am home!" cried the old man; and the full morning was reflected from his face as he added, "Mine eyes shall see the king in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off." And as he embraced his comrades, he handed over the lantern to his son,

and said, "Keep this as a light unto your feet, and a lamp unto your path." The youth prized the keepsake. He found constant occasion for it. He brightened up the four windows, by which it sent its light backward and forward, and on either side; and with the point of a diamond he traced these mottoes on them:—

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

"When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest it shall keep thee: and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light."

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."

"If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

A lamp lighted while it is yet day,—such a lamp as is let into the roof of a railway carriage, and the little child wonders why they should put it there at noon, but for which no one is more grateful when they plunge into the tunnel; such a lantern as the prudent traveller provides before he is benighted,—

such a lamp is no bad emblem of our own case in relation to the Bible. God has provided us with a sufficient guide to a blissful immortality. His Word is a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path. In Britain, throughout Protestant Europe, in the whole of North America, there is hardly any one who may not, if he chooses, find and keep that path of faith and holiness which leads to heaven. But few set out on the great pilgrimage whilst the day-light lasts. It is not till all around is growing dark, that they remember that this is not their rest, and that they have a city still to seek. It is not till shadows from the tomb, or conscious guilt, or clouds of grief enwrap them, that they find they must sport no longer. And as they grasp their staff, and gird their loins, they bless that wonderful goodness which has already furnished them with a light so clear and unquenchable. In their merry moments, they paid no attention to it. They hardly knew that it was burning. Now they are astonished at its brightness. The intenser that the shadow grows, the more dazzling does it shine; and now that neither sun nor stars appear,—now that the glare of folly, or the glee of health has faded,—they find to their surprise, that their route is becoming plainer, and their spirit waxing stronger; for, as if instinctively aspiring back to the "perfect day," from which it

came, the lamp burns brighter and yet brighter as they go.

"Young man, attend to the voice of one who has possessed a certain degree of fame in the world, and who will shortly appear before his Maker. Read the Bible every day of your life." So said Dr. Johnson to a young gentleman, who visited him on his death-bed; and so has many a pastor said to his young people,—so has many a dying parent said to his children. And if it were from a minister, or some venerable Christian friend that you heard such counsel, you received it respectfully; if it were from a dying father or mother, with tears you promised to comply. Have you forgotten? Have you wearied in well-doing? Have late hours or other pursuits supplanted the Word of God? No: you say that you read it still. But you read it as a task. You would be glad of a dispensation. You would be thankful for a release which would not hurt your conscience, or impeach your filial piety. You carry about the lantern, because you would deem it a profanity, or a breach of promise to cast it away. But hitherto you have found no real occasion for it; and it would not be honest to say that you have used it as a light to your feet, for you have never sought nor followed its guidance.

And yet, my dear friend, God can soon make that

Bible precious. He can send a dangerous sickness; and when you are amusing yourself with a novel or a game of cards, the doctor may come in, and after he is gone your friends are agitated; your sister looks pale, her eye-lids are moist, her cheerfulness is forced; and it all comes out: You are never to get better,—you have sentence of death in yourself. And, after the first flutter of surprise, you push away the novel or the cards, and you say, "Bring me my Bible." Or you went to church one Sunday, and God's Word found you out. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." "He that believeth shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned." You heard something which made you feel that if you continue as you are, it would have been better for you never to be born. You grew dull and moody; but, after a few rebellious strugglings, your heart fell quiet. You saw that it was worthy of a holy God to affix heavy penalties even to your favorite sins. You felt that you had done wickedly and that you were truly vile. And in this humble frame of mind you took up the Testament, and, as well as you could recall them, you turned to those passages which

tell the grace of the Lord Jesus, or which announce God's pardoning mercy. What it was that caught your eye at last I do not know; but it caught your heart as well: for you were presently on your knees, with tears of surprise and thankfulness drenching the open volume, and sobbing out your praises to Him "who forgiveth all your iniquities, and crowneth you with lovingkindness and tender mercies." And ever since, notwithstanding many decays and declensions, you have been a very different reader and hearer of the Word from what you were before.

It is by making the heart soft or the spirit serious, that God makes His own Word precious. It was in this way that several of the French prisoners, during the last war, to all of whom copies of the Scriptures were offered, came under its subduing and renovating influence. In the absence of amusement and with nothing to excite them, many of them beguiled occasional hours of captivity with a book, which in the bustle of the camp they would never have dreamed of opening. They learned from it a secret which reconciled them to many a privation, and which sent more than one of them back to France enriched with the pearl of great price. It is thus that many a convict has had cause to acknowledge with gratitude the timely detection which brought him acquainted with God's Word, and which, through the Gospel-door, admitted

to the fellowship of saints the outcast of society. And it is thus that many a man has had reason to adore that gracious, though for the moment mysterious, sovereignty, which stripped him of his wealth, or deprived him of his dearest friend, or left him for life a shattered invalid; but which, in the same dispensation, taught him to cry, "The judgments of the Lord are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold." "I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me." "I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes."

It does not matter what has been the sobering or softening influence. It does not matter whether there has been some striking Providence, or whether from causes which you can hardly specify, you have been brought to unwonted solicitude about the one thing needful. There is One Being with whom, if your relations are right, nothing need greatly disquiet you; and there is only one document which can inform you how with Him right relations may be secured and maintained. This is the peculiar value of Scripture that to the question which Nature only answers by dim hieroglyphics or brilliant paradoxes, its reply is articulate and authoritative; and on the problem, which reason could not meet even by approximation, it sheds the light of a simple and

exhaustive solution. To the question, "What is God?" it answers,—not space,—not nature,—not the universe,—not merely the Great First Cause; but it answers Jehovah: Jehovah all-sufficient: the Lord Almighty: that living and personal God whose justice and benevolence are as infinite as his wisdom and power, and who does not embark vaster resources or a stronger interest in the framing of a world than he can afford for the welfare and enjoyment of some creature-friend. And to the farther question, "What are the dispositions of this God so just and benevolent, so wise and mighty,—what are his dispositions to a sinner like me?" it answers "merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity transgression and sin." But comforting as this assurance is, it is not conclusive: and till the final query is met,—till you know what to do so as to attract towards yourself God's mercy rather than his justice,—general information as to the Divine generosity and goodness can give you no absolute confidence God-ward. It is here that the Scripture comes forth with its specific announcement, and meets the soul longing for God's friendship with its welcome oracle. God has sent forth his Son to redeem and retrieve lost sinners of our race. The expiator for our guilt, and, if resorted to, the intercessor for our souls, as willing as he is worthy, the Son of God is man's Saviour; and to

plead his atonement,—to cling in grateful dependence to his cross,—is the same thing as to see our name in Life's Book, our soul in Life's Bundle. God loves the sin-expiating, law-magnifying Saviour, and for his sake he loves the cross-clasping, Christ-exalting believer. Sin is perdition, but the antidote of sin is the merits of the Saviour. Sin is perdition; but trust in Christ is salvation.

As the present remarks are chiefly designed for those who are just making a commencement in religion, or who are only thinking about it, I shall conclude with a few words to those who feel some interest in the subject, but who have not yet come to a plenary persuasion that the Scriptures are the Word of God; and to those to whom the subject itself is distasteful, for they despise or dislike that great salvation which the Scriptures reveal.

1. You feel an interest in religion, but you are not sure that you have found a revelation. And if there were only time, you could mention a great many difficulties *in* the Book and *about* the Book which have hitherto prevented you from receiving the Bible as the undoubted Word of God. And you want to know, "What am I to do? I cannot love Christ, till I am convinced of the facts concerning Him; and I shall not be convinced till once I am

furnished with conclusive evidence. I assure you that I am in earnest, but I am not convinced. Where shall I find the evidence?"

Permit us then to ask, if a doctrine were holy, and if predictions were uttered, and miracles were wrought in its behalf, would you not believe that holy doctrine thus attested to be truly Divine? Based on such prophecies and miracles would you not feel that it rested directly on the omniscience and omnipotence of God? But with Jews still in the world, and with their Old Testament the same as our own, do you not believe that the Old Testament prophecies were uttered long before the appearance of Jesus Christ? And from the proofs of their sincerity given by the apostles do you not believe that the miracles which they have recorded in the New Testament are true? In other words, do you not believe that as the fulfilment of so many prophecies and the fountain of so many miracles, Jesus Christ was all that he claimed to be, and which his first disciples died declaring,—the Son of God and the Saviour of men?

Then again, on the Saviour's authority and from the wonderful fulfilment of their prophecies do you not believe that the books of the Old Testament are inspired? On the strength of Christ's promises and their own frequent assertions, do you not believe

that the apostles were divinely inspired to unfold the Christian doctrine more fully to the world? And on the testimony of friends and foes from the first century downwards; from the impossibility of forgery; and on their own internal evidence, do you not believe that the books of the New Testament are the writings of Christ's apostles? And believing all this, do you not actually concede that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Word of God?*

In a matter of such moment we do not deprecate the utmost caution; but at the same time in a matter of such urgency you should not grudge the utmost diligence. It is the turn of your mind to "prove all things," and, like that most sagacious of animals which won't cross a bridge till it has tested its strength,—you say that you can adventure no in-

* By such a process of successive inferences a most accomplished student describes himself as conducted to the threshold of that faith which became the joy and rejoicing of his heart.—*Memoir of Rev. J. Brown Paterson, pp.* 152, 153. On the Christian Evidences, the following works are able and conclusive:—Lyall's "Propædia Prophetica;" Keith's "Fulfilment of Prophecy;" Isaac Taylor's "Transmission of Manuscripts," and his "Process of Historical Proof;" Paley's "Evidences," and "Horæ Paulinæ;" Gurney's "Portable Evidence;" and "The Eclipse of Faith." On Inspiration, the best book is Gaussen's "Theopneustia." Of the Evidences generally, Bishop Daniel Wilson's Lectures are an excellent abstract.

terest except on a well-proven conclusion. So be it; but at the same time remember that this is no holiday excursion, but a life or death retreat,—an escape for dear existence. Remember that betwixt this islet which you occupy and a blissful immortality,—betwixt mortal life and eternal glory, if this bridge be not trustworthy, there is not any other. Your choice is small. It is not, Which of many? It is not even, Which of two? But it is, This or none! You are in the predicament of a castaway, who finds himself on a dry sand-bank surrounded by a rising tide. There were only a few furlongs of it at the first, and already it is half submerged, when the people on the shore espy him and send a boat to bring him off. But he cavils at its construction. He doubts if it is safe. He questions if it will ever get to land. Nay, he has strong suspicions that there is no land at all. But what do you intend to do? There is nothing else in sight—neither sail nor steam. And you have not long to hesitate. Your bank grows less. The waters rise. They soon will swell up to the brim, and the place that knows you now will not know you to-morrow. You might have trusted us: for all this trouble was taken, not to destroy one who is drowning at any rate, but with the hope of saving you.

You say that you are sincere and earnest. We

rejoice to hear it; for in that event it is no uncertain issue. Doubtless, there is an earnestness which prevents people from deriving the full comfort from the most abundant and overwhelming evidence; just as a man's anxiety for his own or his children's safety may make him question the sea-worthiness of a first-class vessel. In the present case few are rendered nervous by inordinate anxiety: far more continue sceptical, or languidly assenting, because their solicitude is only a troubled sleep—a half-awakened apathy. If you are only sufficiently in earnest, your doubts will soon dispel. In his Word God has not left himself without a witness. The "strongest consolation" in this world is theirs who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel, and the most rational of men is the believer in Jesus.

To every man who is really earnest the Bible, sooner or later, commends itself as the Word of the true and holy God; and its pre-eminent revelation, the Gospel, commends itself as the wisdom and the power of God. It is no true earnestness which does not make men candid; and in the case of Christianity candor is the high-road to conviction. A guileful heart may be superstitious, and the evil heart of unbelief may be strangely credulous; but it is the heart which God himself makes "honest" which

yields to evidence, and which, when God speaks, instinctively trembles at the Word—which, when God shines forth, immediately rejoices and adores. "From me Christ required no miracles as witnesses of His truth; He Himself, His life, His thoughts, His actions, towered above the mist of centuries,—the one perpetual miracle of history, the holy ideal of a perfect humanity." Such was the deliverance of a late popular Swiss author:* and the same self-evidencing power of the Scriptures has been thus described by a man of science at Strasburg:†—"A single book has saved me; but that book is not of human origin. Long had I despised it, long had I deemed it a class-book for the credulous and ignorant; until, having investigated the Gospel of Christ, with an ardent desire to ascertain its truth or falsity, its pages proffered to my inquiries the sublimest knowledge of man and nature, and the simplest, and, at the same time, the most exalted system of ethics. Faith, hope, and charity were enkindled in my bosom; and every advancing step strengthened me in the conviction that the morals of this book are as superior to human morals, as its oracles are superior to human opinions."

The fact is, when a man holds out his lantern,

* Zchokke. † Professor Bautain.

and asks you if there is a light in it, you may be able to convince him that there is; but the very circumstance of his asking such a question makes you fear that he is blind; and at all events five minutes of clear vision would be worth a world of your arguments. When a man asks, Do you think the Bible is inspired? is it really the light of God which is shining there? You may prove it by unanswerable argument; and yet you cannot help regretting that he should need to appeal to others; nor can you help remembering how it stands written, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them; for they are spiritually discerned."* Should we meet the eye of any one in this predicament, the best advice we can give is, Read and pray. Yes, read and pray. Pray, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." And as you pray this prayer, read the book, and ponder its sayings; and better feelings will spring up in your mind—holy thoughts and loving, grateful thoughts towards Christ, kind thoughts towards your fellows, devout and contrite thoughts towards God. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes:" and it opens the eyes by rejoicing the heart.† You cannot be

* 1 Cor. ii. 14. † Psalm xix. 8.

long in wistful contact with it without imbibing some of its hallowing influence. You cannot look long at the lamp till its own quickening radiance has opened your eyes. Whilst to its sure word you are still taking heed, the day will dawn and the day-star arise in your heart.

2. My dear readers, it is a solemn thing to be entrusted with these lively oracles. We have adverted to their literary attractions: let us not forget their personal urgency. That Bible is a sacred book. It is God's angel, either hospitably lodged or ignominiously neglected in our homes. May that messenger of God's mercy never prove, through mal-treatment, the recorder of our guilt, and the fatal witness against our wilful impenitence and reprobate mind! For whether we open the Bible to ascertain God's present will concerning us, it is one of the books which shall be opened, and by which our lot shall be fixed, when He comes to decide our final destiny. We are not done with it. We must meet it yet again. Before the great reckoning day there will be an end of most human authorship; and, except as the good or evil which they have done will rise up to bless or condemn the writers, no more will be heard of them. But when all other books are forgotten, when the heaven and the earth have passed away, not a jot nor a tittle of God's Word shall have

perished; but by the light of the Great White Throne we shall read the self-same pages which we so often turned over in our earthly dwellings. Oh, that we could occasionally read these Scriptures with that impression on our minds:—"This is the Word of God which endureth for ever. When I awake on the resurrection morning I shall see few of the things with which I am now familiar. My house and my lands will not be worth a day's purchase then, and gold and precious stones may be had for the gathering: but the soul will be worth exactly what the Bible declared:—it will be cheap could it be bought with a whole world. The comrades whose smile of connivance or whose drunken plaudits used to embolden me in sin, will not avail me when I stand confronted with a holy God; but just as the Bible has said I shall find it,—'Though hand join in hand the wicked shall not be unpunished.' The systems of philosophy, and the different forms of human religion will melt in the midst of that great unveiling; and popular opinion may turn out a grand illusion: but in the new heavens and the new earth I shall recognise the same Jehovah, and shall read the same grand principles of right and wrong, with which I was brought acquainted when a child in the Sabbath-school. Yes, names and notions written in the earth must corrode, and crumble, and

pass away: the earth itself must melt in fervent heat, and revive in a new creation; but Christ's words shall never pass away. Nay, in their lonely and majestic surviving they shall seem to absorb all other words into themselves; and as I read the flame-bright legend on the tablets of eternity, amidst the wreck of all besides, Revelation will stand out the great reality; and I shall feel the responsibility which, in his retrospect of the 'Course of Time,' the poet ascribes to the possessors of this volume:—

'They had the Bible. Hast thou ever heard
Of such a book?—The author God himself.
The subject God and man; salvation, life
And death—eternal life, eternal death!
Most wondrous book! bright candle of the Lord!
Star of eternity!—the only star
By which the bark of man could navigate
The sea of life, and gain the coast of life securely.
This book,—this holiest, this sublimest book,—
Was sent—heaven's will, heaven's code of laws entire—
To man: this book contained, defined the bounds
Of vice and virtue, and of life and death;
And what was shadow, what was substance taught.'"

CHAPTER V.

THE BIBLE AND THE CHRISTIAN.

In the spring of 1817, there used to meet together in a large saloon at Geneva, from twenty to thirty students. Some of them were ardent and accomplished young men, and all of them were aspirants to the Christian Ministry. But at that time, little faith was found in Geneva. The city of Calvin and Beza was under the spell of Voltaire and Rousseau, and in the christened Paganism of its Theological Academy, "St. Plato and St. Seneca" had supplanted St. Paul and St. Peter. These young men assembled every alternate evening, and took their places at a long table, on which lay the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, with many versions, German, French, and English. In this little college, the professor was a retired naval officer, from Britain. He was a grave and thoughtful man. He

had gained his ascendancy over his scholars, by the interest which he manifested in their future ministry. They had no idea that the pastorate was such a responsible and weighty office; but as he spoke so seriously about the thousands of souls of which they were soon to have oversight, the solemnity of the stranger solemnized themselves. They were now searching the Scriptures daily, on purpose to ascertain the truth of God: and as unheard-of doctrines, such as human corruption, the incarnation, justification by the righteousness of another, one by one came forth from the open volume, great was the astonishment of these youthful "Bereans." Of course, many difficulties were felt, and not a few objections and cavils were started: but it was only by comparing Scripture with Scripture, that Mr. Haldane explained or defended its statements. "There it stands written with the finger of God," was the end of the matter; nor was there any question on which texts did not occur instant and apposite to this "living concordance." As the result, almost every one of these students became a distinguished Evangelist; and in the persons of men like Gonthier and Rieu, and Merle d'Aubigné, many dark places in France, Belgium, and Switzerland were penetrated by the light of the Gospel; nor is it saying too much to affirm, that, through the Evangelical Society in which it ended, the whole of French-speaking

Europe is destined to feel the effects of that season's earnest Bible-searching.*

The Bible is the book out of which every reformation of doctrine has issued, and every revival of religion. And whether we are called to be the instructors of others, or are only desiring security and precision to our own system, we cannot do better than resort at once to the oracle. Or, as is still more likely, if any one of us has notions indefinite or undecided on some important article, he cannot do better than study that portion of Scripture in which it is especially treated. Is it the person of Christ on which you long for clearer light? Do you want to know whether he is Divine, and whether without idolatry you may give him not only love and gratitude, but adoration and worship? Then read the books of St. John. Is it the great atonement on which you desire to be more fully informed? Do you wish to know the exact function which the great High Priest discharges,—whether his "finished" work be an exclusive and exhaustive expiation for sins, or a sacrifice requiring constant repetitions, and originating a new sacerdotal order? Then read the Epistle to the Hebrews. Or is it on

* See "The Lives of Robert and James Alexander Haldane," chap. 18.

the doctrine of justification, that you covet more precise and thorough instruction? Do you seek to know where God would have you rest your hope of heaven? whether it is your faith, or your feelings, or your improving self, that He would have you trust,—or his own dear Son the Saviour? Then read the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. Whatever be the point on which you would know the mind of God, you will find some portion of his Word which gives forth the Divine deliverance; and when that portion is illustrated and confirmed by appropriate parallels, your faith will stand not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.

However, to regard the Book as a mere oracle giving forth responses on doctrinal questions, is a cold theory of Scripture. The poet* tells how he "shot an arrow into the air," and owing to the swiftness of its flight he lost it. In like manner, he adds,

> "I breathed a song into the air;
> It fell to earth, I knew not where.
> Long, long afterward in an oak
> I found the arrow still unbroke:
> And the song, from beginning to end,
> I found again in the heart of a friend."

Such recoveries and recognitions of one's thoughts

* Longfellow.

are always pleasant. You had forgotten the saying; but months afterward some one tells you how to him it had proved such a word in season. You have no remembrance of having ever met this prosperous merchant; but he asks, "Do you not recollect the advice you gave a young man, who brought you a letter of introduction from such a friend twenty years ago?—advice which I followed, and here I am." Nor does anything delight you more, than to find that you are so loved by another that he acts on your wishes, and you constantly see carried out in his silent proceedings, requests or suggestions of your own. If the most delicate token of affection, this is also the most decisive. It proves that you live in the heart of your friend; and that, seen or not seen, you are truly dear to him.

God's bow is never bent at a venture. He never loses sight of His arrows. No word of His ever misses its mark, but each accomplishes its purpose. And yet it is not the less a joy to Him when that word finds a welcome, and of all men he is to the Most High the dearest, in whose affections God's words are hidden the most deeply, and in whose conduct they most conspicuously re-appear.

Perhaps, it will be brought still nearer to our apprehension if we recall the saying of the Saviour, "If ye abide in me, and *my words abide in you*, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto

you." "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love." * In the heart of Immanuel were hidden all the desires and commandments of the Father; and to carry them into effect, was the labor of love which gave unity and grandeur to his entire incarnate history. And it was this which drew towards him the perpetual complacency of his heavenly Father. On the one side, the obedience of his beloved Son was an incense, ever ascending through the sin-laden atmosphere of earth; and, on the other side, the Father's recognition of that obedience was a blessing constantly returning,—dispelling in some degree the miasma of the curse, and opening through our murky air streaks of that sapphire which formed the firmament of an untainted Paradise. And just as it was by keeping the Father's commandments, that the Son abode in the Father's love, so it is by keeping the Saviour's commandments, that he tells us, we shall abide in the Saviour's love. Nay, if Christ's word abide in us, we shall come to such a blessed unison,—our will shall be in such harmony with his, and such a delight shall it be to him to show his love to his disciple, that "we shall ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us."

The Saviour desires our love. He desires to live

* John xv. 7, 10.

in our grateful affection. And just as whatever we do in remembrance of Him, helps to endear Him to us, so the more richly that His word dwells in us, the dearer are we to Himself.

Wherever such a word is acted out, the soul is at once made happier and stronger. It is instantly brought nearer to that Divine Friend whose promise is thus trusted, or whose wishes are thus fulfilled: and, as an inevitable consequence, it receives an augmentation of spiritual vigor, and is better able to believe the next true saying, or to do the next right thing.

A little girl, ten years of age, who had long been nursing a sick sister, and whose mother was in feeble health, was getting quite worn out. One morning as she trudged along to procure medicine,—as she thought how hard it was to be always waiting on the invalid when other children were at play: and then, when she thought how likely it was that her sister would die,—betwixt weariness and grief she began to weep bitterly. But a sudden thought crossed her mind. Her tears were dried, and her step grew light and nimble. After she returned, noticing how cheerfully she went about her work, and how briskly and easily she did it, her mother asked the reason. It turned out that the verse had come into her memory, " I know, O Lord, that thy

judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." Day and night thenceforward she never wearied in her attendance on the invalid. Her cheerful countenance did more good than any medicine. And ere long she had her reward, for her sister recovered.*

Mr. Simeon, of Cambridge, was at one time an object of much contempt for Christ's sake and the Gospel. And though usually he bore up bravely, it was very trying to know that nobody liked to be seen in his company: and one day as he walked along with his little Testament in his hand, he prayed that God would send him some cordial in his Word. Opening the book his eye alighted on the text, "They found a man of Cyrene, Simon (or Simeon) by name; him they compelled to bear Jesus' cross." "And when I read that," he tells us, "I exclaimed, 'Lord, lay it on me: lay it on me; I will gladly bear the cross for thy sake.' And I henceforth bound persecution as a wreath of glory round my brow." †

In the Tower of London you have read the verse inscribed by one of the bloody Mary's prisoners, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall

* "The Holy Scriptures" (Tract Society Anecdotes)—where many interesting facts are collected.

† Simeon's Life, p. 676.

be saved." And you remember how it is related of the Non-Conformist, Mr. Lawrence, of Baschurch, that when some one reminded him that he had eleven good arguments against giving up his living, and asked him how he meant to maintain his wife and ten children, he answered, "They must all live on the sixth of Matthew, 'Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? but seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'" And countless instances might be quoted where, to every range of intellect, from the little child up to the learned philosopher, and in all emergencies from a matter of daily routine up to a question of life or death, the all-fitting and all-foreseeing word of Christ has been the antidote of temptation, the incentive to duty, the joy in tribulation. On its nail fastened in a sure place thousands have suspended their earthly future as well as their eternal all, and they have not been confounded. With its sword turning either way they have put to flight armies of doubts and fears, and whole legions of Satanic suggestions. Times without number on the guilty conscience or the troubled spirit has a healing leaf descended, fresh from the Tree of Life, and charmed into the evening's ecstasy the morning's anguish. None of that Word shall return to the great speaker "void;"

for according to their various faith or susceptibility, absorbed into the soul of disciples, it will outlive the most enduring of tablets and outshine the most brilliant of transcripts; and although every Bible should perish, the whole of Christ's sayings might be recovered in his living epistles. They might all be collected again in the hearts of Christ's friends.

All flesh is grass, and the grave is fast filling with great authors. Once they are there praise cannot flatter them, affection cannot cheer them. And, except that small number whose "works do follow them," they may either be ignorant of the influence which they are exerting in the land of the living, or they would rather that they did not know. But the Author of the Bible lives. The Saviour, whose sayings it perpetuates, lives. The Holy Spirit, who taught the men of God to write it, lives. It is a joy to the Lord Jesus when any saying of his finds a frank believer or a cheerful doer. It is a gladness to the Spirit of Grace when those pure loving words of his refine a coarse nature, or persuade a stubborn will, or heal a broken heart. It is a delight to the Most High when his own truth credited leads any soul to regard him trustfully and loyally, and to cry to him, Abba,—our Father who art in heaven. The Author of the Bible is not like one who publishes a great book, and so far as he is concerned its influence is posthumous: but he is rather like one

who sends a letter into your dwelling and awaits its result. He is rather like one who has indited a volume with an eye expressly to your benefit, and who finds his joy fulfilled and his purpose answered when you begin to bend to its reasonings, to mould your life on its maxims, to fill your soul with its inspiring motives. Under God's eye read God's own Book, and pray for that Comforter's teaching who can make the literal Scripture a living message and a transforming power. Then, —when your principles and rules of action are derived from this celestial source, you will understand how a man by becoming truly scriptural becomes "a temple of the Holy Ghost." And, if you cannot say it yourself, when Christ's Word dwells in you richly, you will understand how another could say it, "I live, yet not I: Christ liveth in me." Believing God's truth and receiving God's Spirit, as long as the Lord lives you need never want a friend, nor as long as He has a cause in the world, need you ever want a pursuit.

As we said in the last chapter, it is the darkness which makes the lantern so welcome. And it is the darkness of the sickroom or the house of mourning in which this "Night-lamp"* emits all its heavenliness.

* The happy name of a very edifying narrative of a sister's last days by Dr. John Macfarlane.

You will find it so. Fond as you are of books, there is only one that you will value at last; and with your head on the pillow you will hardly care to be told that a new volume of the Great History is published, or a marvellous epic out-peering all its predecessors. "No; read me the twenty-third Psalm. Let me hear the fourteenth of John." When your strength sinks yet lower,—when your interest in all under the sun has faded away, and ebbing life affords not even a parting tear,—it will for a moment rally the worn faculties, to hear the whisper, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." And when all is over, when to orphan children and desolate kindred the world is grown a great sepulchre, and the most tender friends are vain comforters; when letters of condolence lie unopened, and words of compassion fall like hail-stones on the heart,—the first thing which sends a warm ray into the gloom, and brings to the eye tears that are not bitter, is when Jesus himself breaks the silence, and you hear, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "What are these who are arrayed in white robes, and whence

came they? These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

By the confession of the world's own poet, "Christianity is the religion of the sorrowful." * Nothing can be truer. Christ is indeed the mourner's Friend. Christ's Word is the "Afflicted Man's Companion." And if any humane spirit would like to mitigate the distresses of his brethren; if you would fain be a son of consolation to the sons of sorrow, the kindest thing you can do is to conduct them to this source of perennial comfort. The world is full of sufferers: and if you do not meet them in the streets, city missionaries and others will soon direct you to their dwellings. There, or in the public hospital, you will find them, bed-rid, consumptive, palsy-stricken, blind, wasting away in direful

* Moore in "The Epicurean."

diseases; and what can you do for them? What can philosophy do? What can mere human philanthropy do? The one would discourse on the pain-conquering power of a resolute will, or would expatiate on the lot of mortality:—as if writhing anguish could be mesmerized by stoic saws, or a fever could be cured by fatalism. And the other, wiser and kinder, would seek for the tossing sufferer better attendance, or a purer air, or a less uneasy couch; but it is a short limit to which, when humanity has gone, it can go no farther. The best skill cannot cure old age; the rarest cordial cannot tempt the sickly palate; the purest air, the softest couch, the kindest nursing cannot conjure into health those that are doomed to die. But in his mercy God has provided an assuagement for such misery,—an effectual antidote to the worst ingredient in the cup of woe. Visiting your poor neighbour, you will probably find that antidote already in the house, but its value is still unknown. It is your privilege to be the ministering angel, and to point out to the dying Hagar the hidden well. Putting into the words as much of Christ's own tenderness and kindness as you can, you read or repeat some appropriate passage; and, just as the scanty strength can bear it, you add here a little and there a little, and renew your visits till, in an arrested ear and opening heart, God crowns

your love and answers your prayers. And those only who have seen it can tell the difference between the sick chamber where there is no hope, and one lit up with immortality—between the dull endurance or the rebellious resistance of the stricken transgressor, and the patient cheerfulness and prophetic joy of a Lazarus, whose sorry couch is spread in glory's vestibule. So that next to his highest service who pre-occupies with Scriptural principle a healthful youthful neighbour, and who thus secures for society a Christian citizen, as well as for heaven a meet inheritor,—is his visit of mercy who carries to the abodes of wretchedness the tidings of great joy, and who, with the help of the Holy Spirit, reveals the secret which makes the worst pain tolerable, and the sorest affliction joyful,—which beguiles with songs the longest night, and teaches the man of sorrow alway to triumph through Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BIBLE AND THE INVALID.

SALMASIUS was perhaps the most learned man in all the seventeenth century. He had read not only books, but libraries; and yet, when he came to die, it was his bitter exclamation, "Oh, I have lost a world of time! Had I but one year longer, it should be spent in reading David's Psalms, and Paul's Epistles." Wheresoever the Bible may be despised, it is sure of a respectful welcome in the sick-room; and however stalwart the intellect, however sturdy the gait of healthy days may have been, there is no comfort in the valley, without the sustaining of this staff. Some Christians stand forth from their fellows, conspicuous for moral energy or mental vigour; but in these solemn hours, there is nothing left for any but to fall back on the faithful

saying. There have been few braver spirits than John Knox; few steadier thinkers than John Foster; but the biographer of the latter tells us, that "during the last two or three days of his life, the Scriptures (chiefly the Psalms) were by his own desire exclusively read to him;" and when Knox was laid on his death-bed, along with other portions, he made his attendants read to him every day the fifty-third of Isaiah, and the seventeenth of John.

The late Mrs. Isabella Graham of New York had compiled for her own use a little collection of Scriptures and hymns, which she entitled "Provision for my last Journey through the Wilderness, and Passage over Jordan." And whether collected into a manual or not, it is well to have at command those portions of the Word which, thoroughly trusted in the faintest hour, will be "everlasting arms" around the spirit. For such purposes none are so suitable as the simplest announcements of God's forgiving and fatherly mercy,—those gospels of his grace which constitute the pre-eminence and the charm of the Scriptural revelation. Short and plain, they are divinely adapted to the languid powers of sickness; or, should there be a capacity for more sustained attention, the gentle words of the Saviour, and the soft breathings of the Psalmist, will fall on the ear more soothingly than the accents of the most tender human comforter.

However, the sickness may not be "unto death;" at least so gentle is its progress and so slowly do its stages succeed one another, that the house appointed for all living is a terminus far off and rarely remembered. You have little pain; you are only very feeble? Or, you have paroxysms of severe suffering, but with long intervals of ease? You hope to get better? Or, you fear that you will not? We do not know how it is with the frail body; only you are an invalid. And in that circumstance you have a special call to acquaint yourself with the Word of God; and for attaining this acquaintance you have a great advantage. God in his providence is now saying, "Arise; this is not your rest;" and by secluding you from distracting occupations or giddy friends, he is giving you a rare opportunity to commence that acquaintance with himself which will make you blessed now and for ever.

In his old age Carsten Niebuhr, the great traveller, was blind; but, as he lay on his bed or reposed in his easy-chair, his face would be often luminous with an inward joy. He was meditating on the splendid scenes which he had so often viewed in the sunny Eastern land: and as its glowing landscapes and its brilliant starry vault rose again from the depths of his memory, he feared for them no eclipse, and never missed the flat marshes of Holstein. And so, my friend, should God open your

eyes to the wonders of his Word, you will not be resourceless though all other joys are cut off. You will grow intimate with patriarchs, and apostles, and other noble acquaintances whose names are in the Book, and whose present abode is in the many mansions. You will get to know a Friend whose earthly history is in the Book, and whose present home is at the right hand of the Father;—a Friend, who when the midnight taper only reveals an empty room, is still so nigh that he can hear your softest whisper: and were you breathing forth your spirit in the silence, would bear it instantly to the bosom of immortality, and introduce it to the white-robed company. You will become familiar with the New Jerusalem, and the tree of life, and the pearly gates, and the crystal river. And, mayhap, as you meditate on these, and as you essay to think on the glorious perfections of the great I Am, and as you muse on the paradise that was, and on the new earth that is coming, and as precious promises crowd round you, each with an earnest in its arms,—amidst the bliss of believing God's truth and the joy of enduring God's will, you may get such songs in the night as never were heard in the halls of the worldling, and the visions of God will eclipse all the pageants of time.

So was it with a happy sufferer whose history we lately read. Poor and dependent, for six and thirty

years the victim of incurable maladies, often undergoing excruciating agony, sometimes for a lengthened period blind, few have experienced the exquisite enjoyment of which her shattered tenement was the habitual abode. As she wrote to a friend, "My nights are very pleasant in general. I feel like David when he said, 'I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait: and in His word do I hope.' And while I am enabled to contemplate the wonders of redeeming grace and love, the hours pass swiftly on, and the morn appears even before I am aware." "I experience so much of the Saviour's love in supporting me under pain that I cannot fear its increase." Once, when a lady, shuddering at the spectacle of her sufferings, said that if called to endure such pain herself her faith must fail, Harriet quoted the text, "Strengthened with all might, unto all long-suffering with joyfulness," and added, "Yes: and I think this is one end to be answered in my long afflictions —*encouragement* for others to trust in Him. This precious Book is my constant companion, and its truths and promises my unfailing support."*

* "Gold Tried in the Fire: a Memoir of Harriet Stoneman."

CHAPTER VII.

HINTS TO THE BIBLE STUDENT.

NEAR the Franconia Mountains in America, there died a very aged man last August. Shrewd, vigorous and sturdy, he lived without God in the world, fourscore and four years,—a grasping, passionate, and domineering man, a thorough-going worldling. But the sudden death of an old acquaintance startled him. He felt that it was time for himself to get ready, and by an exertion, almost incredible, he learned to read the Testament. "Yes, it was hard work," as he said to a friend. "At my time of life to begin with the letters and learn to read, was hard work. Sometimes I could not make out the sense. But I would cry to the Almighty to help me, and then I would try again, and He would help me to find it out. So that, now, I have read the Testament through eight times, and

here I am in the epistle of Peter, the ninth time; and Oh," he added, with streaming eyes, "it is glory and praise in my heart." He was a sagacious and energetic old man, and, as he said himself, "I wanted a religion that should be good and strong, and that would keep by me, and help me when I came to die. So I cried to the Almighty, and he gave me a heart for the blessed Testament. I found out how to read it, and then I read in it that Jesus Christ made the world, and the rivers, and the mountains. And then I began to pray to Him, that He would give me a new heart; and He gave it to me. And I read, that when He lived on earth, He healed the sick and the blind, and was good to the poor; and then I knew that He would be kind to me; and He forgave me, and gave me a new heart." It was quite true. The change on his harsh and rugged nature was very wonderful; and as he said to the great American Statesman, who was his brother-in-law, "I have had done for me, Daniel, what neither you nor all the great men in the world, could do for me; I have got a new heart." And, returning to his home, Mr. Webster said, "Wonderful things happen in this world, and one of them is, that John Colby has become a Christian." *

When the reader is prompted by such a powerful motive, the Bible is sure to be abundantly interest-

* See a recent tract of the American Tract Society.

ing, and it is hardly needful to give rules for its profitable perusal. But if I do not mistake, most well-disposed persons wish that they carried to the Book a warmer enthusiasm, and sat down to it with a keener relish. They know its Divine authority. They feel how solemn is its claim on their attention. They would not be happy to let days or weeks pass without a portion read. And yet they regret that their Bible-reading is so mechanical; that it is so often a tedium and a task-work; and altogether they feel guilty and uncomfortable at their treatment of the Word of God.

We may assume that it is not for want of intrinsic interest or importance, that the Bible proves dull or distasteful to any reader. And for the sake of those who would like to enjoy it more, I would offer a few plain suggestions.

1. The very copy of the Bible which you use, is a matter of some moment. A man of letters will read our English epic in the smallest size and sorriest type, rather than not read it at all; but if he possess the Bard of Paradise in a worthy garb,—if his edition be a learned luxury,—a delight for the eyes to look upon, he will be ready to return to it, and by casual peeps as well as stated perusals, he will be apt to grow mighty in Milton. So with the Jews, ancient and modern. Their transcripts of the Law are prodigies

of penmanship, and apart from all other value, would be worth collecting as caligraphic wonders. In like manner, as one means of enhancing the value of the Book, would it not be well to get an attractive copy? an edition so fair and bright, that its very beauty would coax you to return, and, instead of straining your eyes over blurred and blotted columns, the clear and expressive type, like the recitation of an articulate speaker, would "give the sense, and cause you to understand the reading?" *

2. But in order to understand the meaning, you must take advantage of every help. There is a Geography of the Bible,—an Archæology of the Bible,—a Natural History of the Bible; and it is ignorance of these which makes many portions so insipid. For example, the Acts of the Apostles read without a map, even if they convey some lessons to the heart, must remain a chaos in the memory. But if, instead of its starting points and stations all merging in one another,—if instead of fancying Corinth and Colosse, both towns of Greece, and Antioch and Athens, adjacent villages,—if the route of the Apostle resolve into geographical distinctness, it will not only be intensely interesting to follow him from place to place, and mark the successive stations where the Gospel was planted; but

* Nehemiah viii. 8.

it will materially enliven your perusal of the Epistles, when you think of the localities where the Roman, Corinthian, Philippian, and Thessalonian converts dwelt—the first fruits of European heathendom; or when you call up the circumstances connected with the Galatian, Ephesian, and Colossian Churches,—half Hebrew, half Hellenist. In like manner, some knowledge of Assyrian and Medo-Persian history is essential to a full command of the Old Testament prophecies; and not only are Amos and Obadiah new books when read among the forsaken rock-eyries of Petra, but Jonah, Nahum and Habakkuk, and many portions of the larger prophets are full of enigmas, the solutions of which have only lately been dug from under the earth-mounds of Mesopotamia. Even the knowledge of an Eastern custom is instant light on the corresponding fact or saying. When you see a Syrian flock following the shepherd, and answering to his call, you remember, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me;" and when you see the herdsman bringing home to the village at the close of day, the oxen and asses, with which he was entrusted, and once he is within the gate leaving them to themselves, for he knows that they will find their own way through the streets, and all seek their respective stables,—you understand Isaiah's words, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass, his master's

crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Were the climate, the seasons, and the husbandry of the Holy Land, carefully noted by some competent observer, they would throw fresh light on many a Scripture; and even the little which is known of its Natural History, has dispelled many a difficulty. In the siege of Samaria, we are told, that "an ass's head was sold for four-score pieces of silver, and a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver," * and many have wondered why this last should be sold at all: but when we know that it is the bulbous root of the Star of Bethlehem† which got this name, and which was often used for food, the wonder ceases. People used to think the coneys of Solomon the same as our rabbits, which are indeed "a feeble folk," but which do not "make their houses in the rock." Now that the coney is ascertained to be the Daman or Hyrax, ‡—a shy defenceless creature, which lurks among the cliffs of the mountains, and darts into its den at the least approach of danger, the words of Agur acquire their full significance. When Solomon says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest;" there

* 2 Kings vi. 2. 5. † *Ornithogalum umbellatum.*
‡ *Hyrax Syriacus.*

can be little doubt that he ascribes a hoarding forethought to the ant. But as no European species is known to lay up stores, it has been usual to understand the passage as an accommodation to a popular impression. It may be so; but in Asia there is at least one store-gathering species. "In June, 1829," says Colonel Sykes, "in my morning walk, I observed more than a score of little heaps of grass seeds (Panicum) in several places, on uncultivated land near the parade ground [at Poonah]; each heap contained about a handful. On examination, I found they were raised by a species of ant (Atta providens), hundreds of which were employed in bringing up the seeds to the surface, from a store below: the grain had probably got wet at the setting in of the monsoon, and the ants had taken advantage of the first sunny day, to bring it up to dry. The store must have been laid up from the time of the ripening of the grass seeds in January and February." *

3. This leads me to mention another Bible-help, which I think you will find very valuable. Would it not be good for every one to keep for himself, a little store-house of Bible-illustration? Every book that elucidates Scripture is useful; but to each person the most serviceable of all commentaries would be one of his own compiling. Were any one to get an interleaved Bible, or still better, perhaps, a blank-

* Entomological Transactions, vol. i., p. 108.

paper book; and whenever, in reading a theological treatise, or a work of Eastern travel, or in listening to a sermon, he found a dark saying expounded, or a trite saying happily applied, he treasured it up; his casket would soon fill with pearls of great price. Even although, as is usually the fate of such experiments,—even although the record were imperfectly kept up, its value would be unspeakable. Every text thus illustrated becomes in its turn an illustration; not only an enlightened surface, but a luminous source,—a torch to a hundred parallels,—a candle to all the context. And although you never made more than a few dozen entries in such a book, they would shed more meaning over the Bible than days of careless and cursory perusal; and when you had nearly forgotten all other books and sermons, the biographical incidents, the theological elucidations, the illustrative maxims and memorabilia, which you had thus garnered up, would survive, as interesting and instructive as ever.

4. The Bible, as we have already had occasion to mention, is, in one aspect, a book, and in another aspect, a library. It has both unity and variety. It is all alike the Word of God, and yet it is really made up of six-and-sixty volumes. The bouquet is composed of many flowers, but all of them gathered in the conservatory of Heaven. The bundle contains many spices, aloes, myrrh, and cassia, as well as mint, and cummin,—proverbs as well as gospels, chronicles as

well as psalms,—some of them more exquisite, and some of them more homely, but all of them from God; and all of them, in their collectiveness, profitable for doctrine or reproof, for correction or instruction, and combining to furnish for every good work the man of God. And where there is such diversity, there will be corresponding affinities; and without any disparagement to the rest, every reader will find a prevailing attraction to some given portion. The poet is the inheritor of nature. He enjoys it all, and he despises none of it; but there is some form or presentation in which he specially delights. Crabbe loved the low sandy flats of the Suffolk coast, and Wordsworth the hills of Cumberland. Davy forgot philosophy and became a little child among granite peaks, which spoke of his native Penzance; and Scott declared that he should die if he did not once-a-year inhale the heather. Each had his turn, and for every taste the Creator had provided a counterpart. And so the believer inherits the Bible. The record of his Father's love is all his own. But though it is the same God who gives it all, and though it is the same Saviour whom it all reveals, there are diversities of tastes; and to meet these tastes, there are diversities of adaptations. Leighton basks in the warm evening sunshine of Peter, and Luther grows electric with the yearning affection and evangelistic

ardor of Paul. With the Sermon on the Mount and the hortatory epistles for their topic, the English reformers sought to foster in their hearers a practical piety; whilst, coeval with the Ridleys and Rogerses, the Donns and the Hammonds of England, the North gave birth to men like Knox, and Melville, and Bruce,—men who took their cue from the old Hebrew prophets, and their text from the Kings or the Judges,—a lion-bearding, image-breaking race, full of their own sublime purpose, out of a race of swordsmen and robbers to make a covenanted nation,—and in carrying that purpose as fearless of man as they were faithful to their God. And so, it is not only possible, but we would almost say desirable, that each Bible-book had its own student,—one who found in it a special pleasure, and who round it as a nucleus aggregated materials from the rest. But it is still more needful alongside of any partial study like this, to secure a comprehensive knowledge of the Scriptures complete. No single book can make a Bible, just as no one truth can make a full revelation. It is, therefore, by comparing Scripture with Scripture,—by reading Hebrews in the light of Leviticus,—by supplementing Matthew's parables with John's conversations,—by comparing the justifying righteousness of Romans with the justifying faith of Galatians, and both

together with the faith-justifying works of James, that our creed will attain symmetry and system, and like an arch, which is not all pier or all key-stone, but which consists of many courses fitly framed together, our faith—self-consistent and self-sustaining—will not readily break down. The Gospel,—the great faithful saying, is the key-stone; but on that grand central truth,—the Cross of Christ, God Manifest, Love Incarnate, the Mediator at once human and Divine—on that great key-stone, from where Genesis opens to where the Apocalypse closes, every successive instalment has a purchase and puts forth a strengthening pressure. And if it add to your intelligence to know the special purport of every Bible-book; if it be creditable and scholar-like to be able to tell, off-hand, how Second Samuel relates the reign of David, and how Second John is an apostolic counsel to a Christian Lady; you will only attain a thorough Bible mastery, you will then only be mighty in the Scriptures, when you know their respective contributions to the cardinal Revelation, and can point out that testimony concerning Jesus, which is the essence of them all.*

* Every book of the Bible has its own "burden." It makes its specific addition to the aggregate Revelation. The reader could address himself to no more profitable inquiry than to ascertain the principal subjects and prevailing purport of each

5. Those who are acquainted with Greek or Hebrew, will naturally take the opportunity of reading the Scriptures in their original languages. In that case, they will find no doctrine nor important fact with which our authorized version has not already brought them acquainted; but they may find many expressions, which, in the original, acquire new force or felicity. But a chief advantage of reading the Greek, or the Hebrew, is, that it keeps the mind alert, and necessitates a closer marking of words and phrases, than when running over the well-known verses of our English Bible. For the same reason you will often find it of service to read a foreign translation. In Luther's or De Wette's German Bible, in the French of Martini or De Sacy, in the Dutch or Italian Testa-

book,—in some cases, of each chapter or section; and it would be a material aid to his understanding and memory if he could condense the result into a brief "running title." In the German Psalters, quaint and suggestive names are given to some of the psalms. For instance, the 101st is "David's Regenten-spiegel," "David's Mirror for Magistrates;" the 119th, "Der Christen goldenes A B C," &c., "the Christian's golden Alphabet." Thomas Brooke calls the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, "that little Book of Martyrs;" and "Sacred Idylls," is the name which Dr. Goode has given to his version of Solomon's Song. The reader will have no difficulty in finding out "King David's Pastoral," and Messiah's "Epinikion, or Carmen triumphale;" but every one may not have noticed that the New Testament contains two Epistles to the Ephesians, and two to the Hebrews.

ment, the occasional discrepancies and the curious idioms will keep your attention awake; and, like a gem in a fresh setting, like a picture in a new frame, you will be at once surprised and delighted by the novel aspect of familiar ideas. Or, as an edifying recreation, why might not a few friends compare, stanza by stanza, the Psalms, as they have been rendered by Watts, and Merrick, and Keble, and by the Scotch and English versionists; or, as they have been done into Latin measure, by Johnstone and Buchanan? Or, why might they not go over, verse by verse, a chapter of a Gospel, or of an Epistle, as given by Wiclif and Tyndale, and our other early translators,* noting, as they proceed, any seeming diversities or any peculiar and emphatic expressions?

6. In family worship it is usually best to read some book or the entire Bible right through, chapter by chapter; but in his private study, every reader must adopt the plan which suits his turn of mind and his circumstances. A man of leisure may allot a large portion for his daily perusal, and in his progress from book to book, he may avail himself of the commentator or critic who has done the most to ex-

* For this, every facility is afforded in Bagster's "English Hexapla,"—a work containing the English New Testament of Wiclif, Tyndale, and Cranmer, and the Genevan, Anglo-Rhemish, and Authorized versions.

pound it. And a man of little leisure, like the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, may be glad to snatch for his morning meal, a promise or a proverb,—the verse of a Psalm, or a sentence from a Gospel. But even the busiest man will find occasional opportunities for more extensive reading; and on some quiet evening, or in the seclusion of the Sabbath, you could not do better than sit down to the Bible, as you would to a theological treatise or a volume of Christian biography, with your mind made up to a deliberate and straightforward perusal. With this view you may select the history of Joseph or Samson, of David or Solomon; the Journeys of the Israelites; the Missionary Excursions of St. Paul: or you may resolve to master a century of Hebrew History, connecting with the recorded events the cotemporary prophecies: or you may determine to read right through a Gospel Narrative, or the whole writings of some apostle, James, John, or Peter. And just as you find the charms of continuity and completeness enhance all the other attractions of an ordinary book,—so, in perfect harmony with devout and reverential feelings, will the course of the narrative, the development of the leading idea, the progress of the argument, enlist your interest and quicken your perceptive powers. Indeed, there are many of the inspired writings with which it is hardly fair to deal otherwise.

To take the analogous case,—when you have only a minute to spare, you may run your eye over a Hymn of Cowper, or a "Thought" of Pascal, and at once glean something memorable; but you would hardly think it justice to a Sermon of Horsley, or a Biography of Walton, or a Drama of Racine, to read it at the rate of two pages a-day; yet this is the treatment usually given to the kindred compositions contained in the Sacred Volume. No doubt, to keep pace with readers who "run," it has "words upon wheels;" and a Psalm, or a single apostolic exhortation, may supply to the man most hard-pressed and hurried, material for the day's meditation; and we cannot be sufficiently thankful for such terse and portable sayings. But connected prophecies and lengthened narratives lose much of their impressiveness when split into isolated sections; and, to say nothing of the every-day error which quotes the reasonings of Bildad and Zophar, as if they were no less authoritative than the Divine Arbiter's own deliverance—dissevered from that final deliverance, a drama, like Job, loses half its significance and all its unity. Read in this fragmentary fashion, the Epistle to the Hebrews has failed to disclose to many a Protestant the true theory of Christian Sacerdotalism, and the Epistle to the Romans is obscure on the method of justification. And, forbearing reference to the most sacred of all

Biographies, were the reader trying the experiment on himself, he might possibly find that the itinerancies of Paul the Apostle have not left on his mind an impression so lucid as the career of Whitefield or Eliot, and that his outline of Hebrew History is a sad contrast to his knowledge of his own country's annals. And yet, he has read the sacred records ten times as often as any uninspired historian. But—which sufficiently accounts for the difference—the modern author was eagerly resumed night after night, till the perusal was ended: Samuel and Luke were meted out in daily tasks, and never read except in small disjointed fragments.

7. Like other books, the charm of the Bible will very much depend on the frame of mind in which it is studied. To an earnest reader, it will always be interesting; to a docile reader, it will always be new and surprising. If you intended to visit the land of Gold, you would peruse with avidity the publication which described the country, and which told you what equipments to provide. Or if you were fond of some science, you might spend half the night devouring a treatise which expounded its principles, and you would feel richly rewarded in your fresh information or your new intellectual mastery. So was it with John Colby. As soon as he learned to desire a better country, "God gave him a heart for

the blessed Testament;" and nearly all the waking hours of his remaining three years were devoted to its study. If we, too, want "a religion good and strong, that will keep by us and help us when we come to die;" if conformity to God's will be the science on which we are most intent; we shall need no inducement more powerful to draw us back to these Scriptures ever and anon. To an honest heart they never lack the zest of novelty; nor so long as the mind is wakeful will there ever be an end of their wonders. When the Jews returned from Babylon, and were somewhat settled in their ancient city, the occasion was signalized by a great Scripture-reading. Assembling early and commencing with prayer, the Governor and the Ministers occupying a platform in the midst, whilst a vast congregation thronged the square, one voice relieved another, till the sobs and bitter cries of the audience interrupted the speakers. The tale of God's mercies; the recital of his good commandments, and the whole history of their nation's provocations and perversity, had broken the heart of the people; and though the rulers succeeded in stilling their lamentations, no time was lost in carrying out one practical conclusion. "They found written in the law, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month. So the people went forth and brought olive branches,

and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of shady trees, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the House of God, and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness." The perusal of the law had pointed out a neglected duty; the heart of the people was soft; it was the very season when the feast should be kept; no time was lost: but as the people prepared themselves hastily to keep the commandment, so Jehovah blessed with his immediate smile,—"a great gladness,"—the nation's new obedience. An enchanted scene it was in that clear autumn weather: every street arched over with its verdant trellis, and every flat roof a fragrant bower; Jerusalem suddenly converted into a forest, and its new temple a mount waving with shrubbery and blazing with flowers: whilst, sweeter than the breath of the myrtle, rose the incense of praise and the swell of a sanctified patriotism. It was a week of waking blessedness,—as if a segment of the heavenly Sabbath had been inserted in the days of earth, and people wondered at their happiness. Yet, after all, they were only carrying out a command which had for ages existed in the Word of God; with the existence of which some

of them were doubtless acquainted long ago; but which, had it not been for the propitious mood of that moment, might have remained a dead letter till Jerusalem was a second time destroyed. Even so, my reader, there may be both doctrines and duties still latent in Scripture, whose discovery only awaits our more docile perusal. And, like the Jews at the revival of the Feast of Tabernacles, when we comply with the neglected command, or credit the faithful saying, we shall experience "a great gladness,"—the joy which has already rewarded more teachable scholars, and which, with more candor, would sooner have greeted ourselves.

Finally, prayer is a sure means of rendering the Word read both pleasant and profitable. There is a certain congeniality of mind essential to the enjoyment and right understanding of any book. A man of scientific exactitude will soon weary of a work of fancy, and a poet will soon lay aside a work of tame technicalities. And, looking to their external style, there are few minds so universal as to appreciate equally every sacred composition, historical, poetical, argumentative, didactic; and there has been much wresting of Scripture from forgetting this obvious distinction. Frigid critics have applied their micrometers to the imagery of Isaiah, and have subjected to logical severity the metaphors of Job; just as some

over-heated fancies have seen no end of mysteries in the books of Esther and Ezra. Happy is it for a Bible-book when it finds a like-minded interpreter,—when a poet, like Horne, expatiates on the Psalms, and when a logician, like Haldane, expounds the Romans. But, apart from this outward form,—this human style,—historical, didactic, logical, poetic,—there is an inner, all-pervading style,—so to speak, God's own style,—a style of thought which is neither Hebrew nor Hellenistic—nay, nor even Human,—but aloof from all, and above them all,—a Heavenly style,—a tone of sanctity and benevolence and majesty, which makes this book as superhuman as it is all-adapted and all-blessing. To appreciate this,—to enter into this, the Divine mode of thinking and feeling,—it does not need that we become poets, reasoners, sages;—it does need, however, that we become worshippers. No man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him; even so, no one knoweth the things of God, save the Spirit of God: and to give us sympathy with God's own mind, to enable us to credit such love as is the love of God, and to give us relish for such holiness as is the very essence of the Godhead, as well as to make us cheerfully bow to the authority of the Great Speaker, we need to be taught by the Holy Spirit. That Spirit is promised to prayer. God will give his

Holy Spirit to them that ask him. And if, like John Colby, we cry to the Almighty, He will give us a heart for the blessed Testament. If, like Ezra and his audience, our reading of the Law is prefaced by prayer, it will be followed by repentance and reform. If, like David, we exclaim, "Open thou mine eyes," we shall see wonders in God's Word. If, with Paul, we bow the knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, He will strengthen us by his Spirit in the inner man, and Christ believed will dwell in our hearts, and we shall be enabled, through the faith of love, to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ILLUMINATED BIBLE AND THE LIVING EPISTLE.

Before the days of printing, the copyists sometimes took great pains with their manuscripts, and Bibles were then elaborately embellished. Traced in silver and gold and brilliant colors,—occasionally executed on tinted parchment, the mere letters were often a gorgeous picture; and such illuminated manuscripts will always awaken the astonishment and delight of the tasteful antiquarian.

We do not print our Bibles in silver and gold; nor have we verses marked out from the others, by their vermilion ink, or their bolder character. And yet, we have sometimes thought that every careful reader can illuminate his own copy as he proceeds. The book is all bright with passages which, at one time

or another, have stirred or strengthened him:—it is all radiant with texts which have accused, or rebuked, or consoled him. On this verse he heard a sermon which he never can forget: this chapter is associated with some affecting event in his domestic history: and here is a paragraph which gave rise to a dialogue or meditation, ever memorable in his religious career.

Yet, were a hundred such illuminated Bibles compared, it would be found that in no two of them is the same set of passages marked and made prominent. Some may coincide; and a few emphatic sentences may be common to all: but, according to individual peculiarities or providential circumstances, it will turn out that portions fraught with glory to one eye, are obscure or ordinary to every other.

To take two instances. Suppose that each man were to mark in vermilion the verse that first convinced him of sin, or first made him anxious for the saving of his soul. In the Bible of the Apostle Paul, the tenth command would be inscribed in red letters; for, as he tells us, "I had not known sin, except the commandment had said, Thou shalt not covet." In the Bible of Alexander Henderson, it would be, "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber;" for that was the shaft which pierced the

conscience of the unconverted minister. In the Bible of the Ironside soldier, the rubric would be found at Ecclesiastes xi. 9; for it was there that the bullet stopped, which, but for the interposing Bible, would have pierced his bosom; and when the battle was over, he read, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Or, suppose that each were to mark in golden letters the text which has been to him the gate of Heaven; the text through whose open lattice a reconciled God has looked forth on him, or through whose telescope he first has glimpsed the Cross. The Ethiopian chamberlain would mark the fifty-third of Isaiah: for it was when reading about the Lamb led to the slaughter, that his eye was directed to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, and he went on his way rejoicing. The English martyr, Bilney, would indicate the faithful saying, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;" for it was in sight of these words that the burden fell from his back which fasts and penances had only rendered more weighty. There was "a stricken deer" who had long been panting for the water-brooks, but he had yet found

no comfort; when, one day, listlessly taking up a Testament, it opened at the words, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past," and instantly he realized the sufficiency of the atonement, and embraced the Gospel: and, doubtless, the Bard of Olney would signalize by the most brilliant memorial, the spot where the Sun of Righteousness first shone into his soul.—"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." These were the words which instantly converted into a living temple the calm and stately mind of Jonathan Edwards; and we may be sure that,—like Jacob, who, at Luz, would always see lingering the light of the ladder,—every time he returned to the passage, even in his most cursory perusal, the devout theologian would perceive a surviving trace of that manifestation, which into his vacant wistful soul brought "the only wise God," and in glorifying that God gave him an object worthy of the vastest powers and the longest existence.

Such is the Divine variety of Scripture; and thus from the stores of religious biography might be compiled a sort of historical commentary, showing what service in the way of "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness," the different pas-

sages have done. It would be found that in this quiver there are hundreds of arrows which have pierced the conscience and convinced of sin. It would be found that from this tree of life, as many leaves have dropped, and proved effectual to the healing of such wounds. It would be found that in this garden there hardly grows an herb, but some visitor has been regaled by its beauty or revived by its fragrance; and those which have not been sweet to the taste, have, in their very bitterness, yielded a salutary tonic. How many a text should we find invested with its true and touching legend! This was the lamp which lighted such a pilgrim through that ominous eclipse; and this was the hidden manna which, in the howling wilderness, restored his soul. Here is the smooth stone with which he struck down that terrible temptation, and here is the good sword with which he cut off its head. Here is the harp on which he discoursed sweet music when God gave him songs in the night; and there is the staff with which he was comforted when he walked through the valley.

An illuminated Bible makes an illustrative reader; and if, in your private perusal, you come ever and anon on passages made dear and memorable by their bearing on your personal history, in your own turn you will, in some measure, supply that commentary

which, of all others, is the greatest desideratum,—a legible Christian,—an epistle of Christ that may be known and read of all men.

Perhaps my reader is a young man. Perhaps he is a young man of enthusiasm and energy. In exuberant health, and with spirits briskly bounding, he has the prospect not only of living long, but living largely:—a man who will feel in every fibre all the influences of the coming age, and who will be himself no mean influence in it.

Brother, look before you. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" In this abundance of life, and this measure of ability, God has given you a solemn trust. You cannot help telling on others for good or evil. And when a few years are past, you will have done a great deal to deepen the perdition, or to heighten the bliss, of yourself and others.

Methinks I hear you say, "I don't want to be vicious; nay, I would rather be uncommonly virtuous. I would like to be a better man than most of your so-called Saints. I am sick of their affectations and hypocrisies. I cannot bear their cant. I want to be in every action sincere and earnest,—every atom true. I cannot fill up a ready-made formula: I cannot stow myself away in the stiff exuviæ of a misshapen antiquity. I must be original, independent,

real. I shall make my own model, and then I shall make myself."

By all means be genuine; nay, by all means be original. But, on the part of a creature, what is the truest originality? Is it not the closest copying of perfection? that is, the most implicit imitation of the Creator's originals? When Phidias or Praxiteles took a block of marble, did he say to himself, "Now, I shall make a new thing under the Sun:—I shall make a figure which can suggest to the beholder nothing that moveth upon the face of the earth or in the waters under the earth:—something so novel, that it has never entered into the heart of man to conceive it, and nobody will guess where the model was found?" Had he said this, he would have produced an original of that sorry sort which we call an oddity,—something very grotesque and ungainly,—something like an African fetich or a Hindoo pagod. But the great artist said, "I shall make, as near as possible, a perfect man. Gathering up hints of strength and symmetry wherever I can find them, I shall devoutly endeavour to realize that exquisite model which was in the eye of the Divine Artist himself:" and, with the humility of genius, content to copy,—limb by limb, and lineament by lineament, there came out from the dead rock the most unique of all originali-

ties,—a perfect figure, a glorified humanity,—a vision of power and joy which makes us understand how very good, once on a time, was this mortal frame,—how fearfully and wonderfully made at first,—how wonderful and fearful the Resurrection may see it all again.

The Belvidere Apollo is the most unique and original of sculptures, because it is the most earnest and successful of imitations. As far as he could catch sight of it, the artist kept constantly in view the model supplied by the Creator; and it is by combining so skilfully every fragment of peculiar beauty or vigor which came in his way, and by copying these so faithfully, that he has realized such a splendid conception.

Now, making one proviso—remarking that all genuine goodness is spontaneous—that it is excellence followed for its own sake, not mimicked for admiration's sake,—you will find that *the goodness will turn out the most original, not which makes its own model, or strikes out its own style,—but which most closely copies Perfection.* This book supplies such a model. It exhibits a Pattern-Man,—a wearer of our intellect and will and affections, who never spoke a word that was not the right one, and who never did a right deed, so that even he himself could have done it better. This peerless pattern,—this

man so elevated, yet so tender,—so loyal to God, yet so loving to those around him,—so separate from sin, yet so void of sanctimoniousness,—the Word sets before you, and God says, Be ye followers of Christ. Walk as Christ also walked. Let the mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. And a few sublime spirits, made generous by the Spirit of God, have been seized with a blessed ambition, and not because men would admire them, but because they were smitten by goodness so charming, they have gazed on it, and pondered it, and imbibed it, till they were sensibly changed into the same image, and men felt, "There you go, so noble, so lovely. We know where you have been: you could not have attained an excellence so charming, had not Jesus Christ once been in the world, and had you not somehow been brought in contact with him."

The most polished Englishman of the last century was Philip Dormer Stanhope, the fourth Earl of Chesterfield. High-born and well-bred, clever, eloquent, and witty, and endowed with a large amount of natural amenity, he was bent on distinction. To dazzle his cotemporaries was the business of his life. He was a man who made his own model. From the speeches of Cicero, from the epigrams of Martial, from the saloons of Paris and Versailles, he gleaned the several ingredients of classic grace and modern

refinement, and sought to combine them in the courtier, the statesman, and orator. He had no God. In the shrine where the Most High should be, there was a dim outline which looked very like a colossal Stanhope carrying a young Chesterfield in its arms; but, unless this mixture of self-idolatry and son-worship deserve the name, there was no religion in the man. He had his reward. At a levee, or in a drawing-room, he moved, "the admired of all admirers." Few made such formidable speeches in Parliament. None uttered so many brilliant sayings in society. He got ribbons, plaudits, diplomatic appointments, the smiles of the fair, the envy of his peers; everything except true human affection; everything except the approbation of God. Should any one wish to repeat the man, the mould is still extant. It will be found in Lord Chesterfield's "Letters to his Son;"—a book of which our great moralist said, in effect, that "it inculcates the morals of a profligate with the manners of a dancing-master." But before taking more trouble, it is well to know the result. At the close, he confessed that his life had been as joyless as it had been selfish and hollow: "I have recently read Solomon with a kind of sympathetic feeling. I have been as wicked and as vain, though not as wise as he; but now I am old enough

to feel the truth of his reflection, 'All is vanity and vexation of spirit.'" Repartees sparkled on his dying lips, but all was dreary within, all was darkness a-head. The fame for which he lived, expired before himself; and now truth declines to write his epitaph, and virtue has no garlands for his grave.

Still a boy, while this old worldling lay dying, William Wilberforce soon grew up, and the grace of God made him a Christian. That is, it taught him to live not to himself, but to the glory of God. It taught him to worship. It showed him that he was not his own proprietor; that he had no right to make his own enjoyment his chief pursuit; and that he must put all his faculties at God's disposal. In the Bible he found the model on which God would have him form his character. He studied it. He prayed over it. He watched himself, and struggled with his evil tendencies. God's spirit strengthened him, and gave him wonderful self-conquest. Retaining all his natural elasticity, his wit, his bright fancy, his melodious voice and fluent speech,—his random hilarity was exchanged for conscientious kindness, and all his gifts of mind and station were devoutly laid at the feet of his Redeemer. With his pen he expounded to the highest classes that system of vital piety which Whitefield and Wesley had

already preached to the populace; and carrying it to the dinner-tables of Clapham, and the evening assemblies of Piccadilly, many who fancied religion too severe in the sermons of Bishop Porteus or the strictures of Hannah More, confessed to its loveliness in the life of Mr. Wilberforce. Then, in his public career,— keeping himself on purpose "pure,"—avoiding office, never using for personal ends the vast ascendancy over others which his fascinating goodness gave him, any more than the *prestige* of his mighty Yorkshire constituency; alike on the floor of St. Stephen's and on the platform of Freemasons' Tavern, he consecrated to every humane and Christian cause "a persuasive and pathetic eloquence, chastened by a pure taste, varied by extensive information, enriched by classical allusion, sometimes elevated by the more sublime topics of Holy writ—the thoughts and the spirit

'That touched Isaiah's hallowed lips with fire.'" *

How much the individual advocacy of one so loved and honored effected for Missionary and Bible Societies, it would be difficult to tell; but it is hardly metaphor to say that Africa wept when he died. His country will never forget him: for although poets, warriors, and statesmen, in numbers repose under the roof of the Abbey, England recognizes no origina-

* Lord Brougham.

lity more illustrious, no heroism more patriotic, than his who led the campaign of humanity so long, and who achieved the abolition of the Slave Trade.

The model on which Wilberforce was formed, still exists. The reader will find it in the book which we have sought to recommend; and if, in exploring that book, he finds thoughts to which no one yet has done justice, philanthropic suggestions which no one has yet carried out, features of excellence which no one yet has exhibited, he will just repeat the experience of a thousand predecessors, and still will leave a virgin-field for the researches of all who follow.

The Book of Nature is not exhausted. Gutta percha and chloroform, coal-gas and steam-carriages, sun-pictures and electric telegraphs, have all come to light within the last few years; and greater things than these are coming. All that is wanting is an explorer who distinctly understands what it is that he desires, and who will accept the answer when nature flings it at his feet.

The Book of Revelation is not exhausted either. In our own day it has yielded treasures long latent; and we have seen such things come out of it as, "The Astronomical Discourses," and "Elijah the Tishbite." Within the memory of some now living, it has yielded Sabbath Schools and Foreign Missions, Prison-visiting, Ragged Schools, and Convict-refor-

mation. It has emancipated our slaves. It has ransomed from ignorance and bondage our factory children. It has sent Scripture-readers and Evangelists into all our towns. It has given our higher classes kinder and fairer feelings towards their less favored brethren. And scantily as it is even yet admitted into the faith and affections of Christendom, it is the benevolence of the Bible which at this moment keeps its spirit from souring, and it is the "blessed hope" of the Bible which keeps its heart from breaking: just as the existence of that Bible is a pledge that its merciful Creator has in reserve for the world a long Sabbath of peace and righteousness.

Yet, like the good gifts which Nature retained in her bosom, till the sage purchased them and handed them forth to his fellows, all these great thoughts and good schemes were treasures hid in the Scripture, till Chalmers and Krummacher, Raikes and Sadler, Sarah Martin and Mrs. Fry, found them out and brought them forth. But the book is not exhausted; and if you really wish to serve your fellows, this Mentor will show you the way. With its guidance, you will find that the true "excelsior" is humility, and that, like Pascal, Edwards, and Vinet, the believer on his knees sees farther than the philosopher on tip-toe. You will find that the book,

which, among its affectionate copyists, has yielded characters so distinct, yet so excellent, as Arnold and Buxton, Howard and Williams, Martyn and McCheyne, can make you as superior to your present self, as these men were superior to ordinary mortals. In one word, you will find that in things intellectual, he is likely to be the mightiest master who knows the Bible best, and most meekly trusts in God; and in things moral and philanthropic,—in conduct and character,—he is likely to be the greatest original who is the closest copyist—the most implicit imitator of Christ.

HELPS TO THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE.

HERE, of course, we can only indicate literary or mechanical aids to the understanding of the Word of God. Of these, as already mentioned, the most material is a legible and attractive copy of the book. Without any disparagement to his pocket Bible, the first commentary on it which the reader should procure, is an octavo or quarto edition, in a type bold and clear, and on paper so thick that the printing of the obverse page does not shine through.

The next thing is to get maps of Palestine, of the World as known to the Ancients, and of the Travels of St. Paul. These are contained in some editions of the Bible, and in almost every Bible Dictionary.

Of Bible Dictionaries, by far the most elaborate and erudite is the larger work of Dr. Kitto; though some of its contributors are not exempt from German rationalism. There is a useful abridgment of it, which will serve the purposes of

most non-professional readers. Dr. Eadie's "Biblical Cyclopædia," founded on the Bible Dictionary of the American Sunday School Union, is also very good.

On the "Manners and Customs of the Jews," there is a serviceable little volume of the Tract Society; although nothing has yet appeared from any English pen, equal to "Helon's Pilgrimage,"—the charming historical romance of Frederick Strauss,—*not* the author of "The Life of Jesus." The antiquarian allusions of the Bible have been very pleasantly illustrated in Burder's "Oriental Customs," and in Jamieson's "Eastern Manners." Harmer's "Observations" are more elaborate, but less adapted to general use.

Pool, Henry, and Scott, are commentators so well known, that they need not be characterized; but for the elucidation of the text, there is nothing better than the little volumes of Albert Barnes, as far as they have gone. As it contains supplemental Notes of great theological value, our personal preference is for Blackie's edition. The "Pictorial Bible" is also very valuable, especially to the youthful members of a family.

But any careful reader who has a concordance, and a Bible with marginal references, may be his own commentator. The most extensive and serviceable collection of parallels, with which we are acquainted, is contained in Bagster's "Treasury Bible." Brown's "Self-interpreting Bible," and Cobbin's "Comprehensive Bible," have not only a good assortment of references, but a large amount of miscellaneous and useful information.

Should the reader have difficulty in procuring the above-mentioned books, some of which are large and expensive, he will find either of the two following little works as remarkable for the small sum which it costs as for the large amount

of matter which it contains: Nicholls's "Help to the Reading of the Bible," (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge,) or "The Companion to the Bible" (London Tract Society).

The list might be indefinitely extended; but the Bible-student may find aid in his researches from such books as the following:—

Bickersteth's Scripture Help.
Douglas on the Structure of Prophecy.
The Literary History of the New Testament. 1845.
Da Costa's Four Witnesses.
Conybeare and Howson's Life and Epistles of St. Paul.
Taylor's Illustrations of the Bible, from the Monuments of Egypt.
Layard's Nineveh and its Remains.
——— Second Expedition.
McCheyne and Bonar's Mission of Inquiry among the Jews.
Kitto's Physical Geography and Natural History of Palestine.
——— Daily Bible Illustrations.

Few are able to visit the "Lands of the Bible;" but those who desire to have their conceptions of sacred incident and scenery rendered more vivid, should miss no opportunity of viewing such magnificent pictures as the Panoramas of the Nile and of Palestine, which were lately exhibited in London. Beautiful as works of art, not a few spectators can testify how brilliant they rendered many a page of the Bible. And would it not be good if, in large towns, there could be collected a Scriptural Museum? specimens of the different animals, and trees, and herbs, and precious stones, mentioned in the Sacred Text; writers' ink-horns and leather bottles;

winnowing shovels and hand-mills; javelins and water-jars, scrips and phylacteries, scrolls written inside and out,—the entire apparatus of ancient and Eastern life? Would it not be good to have pictures and costly engravings, which illustrate the Bible? and a Library containing Eastern Travellers, Commentators, and all sorts of books which throw light on the Word of God? Would not such an Institution be an invaluable acquisition to ministers, and teachers, and students? Might it not furnish excellent materials for many a popular lecture? And could there be a better treat for good scholars in our Sabbath Schools than a walk through its galleries?

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